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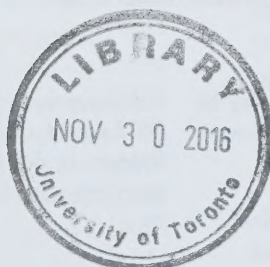
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Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Tuesday 22 November 2016

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Mardi 22 novembre 2016



Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Todd Decker

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 22 November 2016

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 22 novembre 2016

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good morning. Please join me in prayer.

Prayers.

Mr. Steve Clark: Point of order, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order, the member from Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: I don't think the government is awake. I don't believe a quorum is present.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Quorum, please.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): A quorum is now present.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Orders of the day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

BUILDING ONTARIO UP FOR EVERYONE ACT (BUDGET MEASURES), 2016

LOI DE 2016 VISANT À FAVORISER L'ESSOR DE L'ONTARIO POUR TOUS (MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Mrs. McGarry, on behalf of Mr. Sousa, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 70, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various statutes / Projet de loi 70, Loi visant à mettre en oeuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter et à modifier diverses lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister.

Hon. Kathryn McGarry: Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the parliamentary assistant for finance, the member from Etobicoke Centre.

Let me just start by saying that we're committed to balancing the budget by 2017-18, and we've done a lot of work on this side of the House in the last few years to ensure that we're getting to that particular area. We have committed to balancing the budget by 2017-18, and we've done a lot of government work to ensure that we will meet that target, including making sure that we're ahead of those targets year by year.

We are also incorporating new commitments into our plan to make everyday life easier for the people of Ontario. At the same time, we are managing spending. In fact, this year's public accounts show that we beat our annual deficit target again, as I was saying, for the

seventh year in a row. That's worth repeating. That has been day by day, month by month, the thing that we have made sure that we're going to be doing. For the seventh year in a row we are beating those targets.

We have also held growth in program spending over the past four years without making cuts to services or raising taxes.

Continued economic growth is helping to keep the province on track to balance. For the first half of 2016, Ontario posted stronger GDP growth than Canada, the US and almost all other G7 countries. As a matter of fact—and this is something that we're very proud of on this side of the House—Moody's has upgraded our credit rating, showing confidence in our government's plan to grow the economy and create jobs. As we all know, a growing economy and new jobs are the best way to support Ontario families and to generate revenues that will keep us on the path to balance and long-term prosperity.

Mr. Speaker, business investment in Ontario increased by 0.6% in the second quarter of 2016 and 0.9% in the first quarter. At the same time, Ontario's labour market continues to grow. Ontario has recovered all of the jobs lost during the recession and over 640,000 jobs have been created since the recession. This is something all of us Ontarians are very, very proud of. The majority of these jobs are full-time and private sector jobs, as well.

The current unemployment rate is 6.4%. It has been under the national unemployment rate of 7%, month over month, for the last 18 months. Our unemployment rate has been lower than the national average for 18 months in a row and it's the lowest unemployment rate in eight years.

I'm also sharing my time with the Minister of Finance. I really appreciate the few minutes I've had to be able to spend to discuss Bill 70.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Continuing along, you're sharing it with?

Hon. Kathryn McGarry: The member from Etobicoke Centre and the Minister of Finance.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the comments that have already been made recognizing the importance of what it is that we're talking about today, which is inspiring and growing our economy, creating jobs, providing support for health and education, all of which are principal values that we all share.

Of course, we're talking about the second reading of Building Ontario Up for Everyone Act (Budget

Measures), 2016. This fall bill reflects the decisions we're making as part of our commitment, as I've said, to help the people of Ontario with their everyday lives. Our commitment reflects our respect for their hard work and our approach ensures that they have the opportunities to realize their full potential while contributing to Ontario's economy and society today. It reflects our desire to promote better conditions for future generations of Ontario workers, their families and all individuals for tomorrow.

I revealed our actions in detail to this very House earlier this week when we introduced the 2016 Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review. Mr. Speaker, our actions as a government are helping to build that better future. People from all over our great province are building Ontario. They are doing so today, but they're not doing so alone. They expect their government to do its part as well.

Our role in this Legislature is to foster more opportunity for everyone. When we support one person, it makes their life a little bit easier; and when we support making the lives of 14 million people easier, it makes Ontario's economy a much better place and our society a better place to live and raise a family. It is this notion of our collective well-being that underpins this bill.

The legislative amendments that we're bringing forward are aimed at fulfilling our commitment to improve the well-being of all Ontarians. We want to ensure that Ontarians have the opportunity to realize their full potential while contributing to our economy and our society. We want to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to succeed.

As a result, this plan is about making moms and dads get to work and back home safely more quickly. It's about helping businesses, who are those job producers, grow their economy and, of course, create jobs. It's about offering our kids a promising future with great schools, colleges and universities. It's about opportunities to access apprenticeships and industry training programs. This bill will help us achieve that goal.

0910

It's also about housing affordability, Mr. Speaker. Ontarians are telling us that finding affordable housing is one of the top things on their mind. They're concerned that they cannot afford to buy their first home, for example, in today's real estate market. Given the appreciation of home prices, young families, especially those who are having a challenging time to enter the housing market, are looking for relief or some form of support.

Purchasing a first home is one of the most exciting decisions in any person's life. But many today are worried about how they'll be able to afford that first condo or house. Mr. Speaker, we're proposing today, as of January 1, 2017, to double that maximum land transfer tax refund for first-time homebuyers, up to \$4,000. With an increased maximum, no land transfer tax would in essence be payable on the qualifying purchasers of a first home at \$368,000. They would not pay a land transfer tax, and that is of some benefit. In fact, with a doubling

of the refund, more than half of first-time homebuyers in Ontario would not pay the LTT on the purchase of their first home.

I would also like to remind members of this House that during the fall economic statement, our government announced that it was taking action to protect renters as well. We're freezing the property tax burden on apartment buildings while reviewing how the high property tax burden on these buildings affects rental market affordability. Right now, the average municipal property tax burden on apartment buildings is more than double that of other residential properties such as condominiums.

We're also proposing to modernize the land transfer tax system for the first time in a generation. The LTT rates have not changed since 1989. As a result, the government is proposing to modernize these rates to reflect the current real estate market.

The LTT is payable, as you know, on the purchase of any land in Ontario, and it's usually based on the value of consideration, which is typically the purchase price. Overall, the proposed rate increases would impact less than 1% of purchasers of homes here in Ontario. Revenue generated from proposed increased LTT rates would be used to fund the enhancements of the first-time homebuyer refund.

We know that the housing market is an important source of economic growth and employment in Ontario. Improving housing affordability will benefit people across the province while contributing to the creation of jobs and economic growth.

To help ensure we understand the market forces at play and to inform future policies, we're also proposing to collect additional data about the real estate market. This would include the type of property, the intended use, and the citizenship and residency status of the purchasers. As part of this proposal, the province will work with the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario to ensure that the appropriate steps are taken to protect all collected personal information.

Strengthening Ontario's property tax and assessment system is key. A fair and effective property tax assessment system is critical, in fact, to support local services and adequately fund Ontario's school system. That's why we're working with municipalities, the Municipal Property Assessment Corp. and taxpayers to enhance the fairness and effectiveness of Ontario's property tax and assessment system. Specifically, the government is working to give municipalities increased flexibility to manage business property taxes, including business vacancy programs. Today's bill shows how we're moving forward with measures to create a fair and modern provincial land tax system.

Today's bill is also about measures to address concerns about retirement security. Mr. Speaker, tens of thousands of young people across the province are at the beginning of their careers. Many are on contract or working for small businesses and don't have the benefit of a workplace pension plan. For many, it's hard to start

saving for the future. That's why we're strengthening retirement security.

Two thirds of Ontario workers not participating in a workplace pension and many families worried about how they'll maintain their standard of living in retirement required the province to take some action. Our work on the planned Ontario Retirement Pension Plan was the catalyst, in fact, on reaching a national consensus to enhance CPP this past summer. This consensus will help strengthen retirement security for future generations of Ontarians and Canadians.

CPP enhancement is just one component of the province's strategy to support Ontarians in retirement. This bill moves forward many other components of that strategy as well. For example, there are proposed amendments that would enhance the benefit security, providing the superintendent of financial services with greater enforcement powers to ensure compliance with the Pension Benefits Act.

The bill also supports the Investment Management Corporation of Ontario, known as IMCO. This body is a non-share capital corporation that will provide investment management services to broader public sector organizations that choose to become its members. IMCO would deliver enhanced risk-adjusted—

Mr. Mike Colle: A point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): We have a point of order.

Mr. Mike Colle: I know the members opposite in opposition are very interested in the fall economic statement, but I can't hear anything the minister is saying. If they could take the conversation outside, it would be appreciated and show some respect for the member who is up there speaking to the—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I appreciate the concern. I have already asked them to come to order, and I will keep a close eye on that. Thank you very much.

Continue, Minister.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the intervention of my colleague. Of course, all of us in this House are concerned about these very matters. I was just talking about IMCO, which is the Investment Management Corp. of Ontario, which is critical to the success of trying to assemble a number of our agencies so that they can manage our pensions and asset values more effectively and at lower cost for the benefit of all of you and others who are dependent upon some of these services.

IMCO would, as I said, deliver enhanced risk-adjusted returns to its members by providing greater investment economies of scale and facilitating enhanced access to investment opportunities and, of course, world-class expertise.

The province established IMCO on July 1, 2016, by proclaiming the Investment Management Corporation of Ontario Act, 2015, into force. Also, on July 1, we designated IMCO's initial members, the Ontario Pension Board and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board. With combined investment assets close to \$50 billion,

these two institutions provide the scale to ensure IMCO's success. The bill I discuss today helps support the supervisory role of IMCO's board of directors, and with the appropriate oversight of its board, IMCO is preparing for operations beginning in spring of 2017.

Mr. Speaker, changing times are impacting how Ontarians work, live and do business. Our commitment to building a fair society is also about inspiring growth that is more inclusive, lifting people out of poverty and ensuring all of them and all of us reach our full potential. It's why we're developing a basic income pilot. It's why we're also addressing the gender wage gap. It's why we're helping refugees settle in Ontario. It's why we're supporting reconciliation with indigenous peoples.

Taking action to help people in their everyday lives is important to all of us, Mr. Speaker. We're all concerned about rising costs of living and doing business, so we're taking action to mitigate these costs. Starting in January 2017, we will rebate an amount equal to the 8% provincial portion of the HST on electricity bills. This move will help five million families, small businesses and farms.

Mr. Speaker, those are just some of the aspects of our plan to grow the economy, create jobs and help people in their everyday lives. Our plan, which underpins this bill, is working. It's been working over the past two years, as our economy has grown 5.3%. Last year, our economic growth was double the national average. In fact, for the first half of this year, Ontario's growth was faster than that of Canada, the US and almost all other G7 countries. More than 641,000 net new jobs, as I already explained, have been created here since the depths of the 2008 global recession. The majority of these jobs are indeed full-time, they're in the private sector and they're in above-average-wage industries.

We want to do more. Ontario's unemployment rate today is at an eight-year low. These are positive signs, certainly, of our economic growth, but we all know global challenges continue to exist, and we must always be prepared. But our goal has always been clear. We have never wavered from our fiscal plan to balance the budget. In 2015-16, the public accounts of Ontario confirmed that we exceeded the deficit projection by \$3.5 billion, putting us ahead of plan yet again. It was the seventh year in a row that we have beaten that deficit target. I'm pleased to say that, consistent with the 2016 budget, Ontario's deficit for 2016-17 is projected to be \$4.3 billion. As I revealed in the 2016 Ontario Economic Outlook and Fiscal Review, we are on target and we are on plan.

The goal is close now. It's not easy, and it hasn't been, but we will continue to make strategic investments to grow our economy, and we'll make the right choices to bring Ontario to balance next year.

This bill also includes amendments that support the work we're doing, specifically with the Financial Administration Act. The amendment, if passed, would simplify the process for obtaining borrowing authority for re-financing the province's existing debt.

0920

Mr. Speaker, the province's total long-term borrowing is forecast to be \$23.8 billion for 2016-17. It's a reduction of \$2.6 billion from the forecast in the 2016 budget. This is the smallest amount to be borrowed since 2008-09. Thanks to a combination of historically low interest rates and cost-effective debt management, Ontario has been able to keep interest on debt costs below budget projections. As part of its cost-effective debt management, the province has also extended the term of its borrowing to lock in low interest rates for longer periods, reducing refinancing risks. Ontario is also committed to helping develop the Canadian green bond market, and we plan to issue our third green bond before the end of 2016-17.

The province continues to move forward with municipalities and indigenous people. This partnership of shared priorities enables us to build on solid partnerships and, again, improvements to our economy. This bill includes amendments that will reflect our work enhancements in those relationships and with those municipalities. I would like to add that a new era of collaboration between the federal government and the provinces and territories is yielding some positive results, as well. Ontario and the federal government are co-operating to deliver real benefits to people in their everyday lives. These benefits include stronger pension benefits and renewed infrastructure. Together with its partners, the province has also made progress in areas such as reducing barriers to interprovincial trade and fighting climate change.

Mr. Speaker, I began the second reading of Bill 70, the Building Ontario Up for Everyone Act (Budget Measures), 2016, by talking about our common desire, our common goal to ensure a bright future for all Ontarians. That common goal is at the root of all that this government does. It's a common goal that is shared across Ontario, and I believe we all agree, here and outside this room, that what's at stake and what's important to all of us is that people have the jobs and security they need going forward that are enabling our children to have the best opportunities to get a good start in life and that our moms and dads and our most senior are having the health care they require so that they, too, can have security.

Our dream of futures for our children and grandchildren is important. I believe many would say it is. It's a common theme, I believe, and ultimately we all want that same benefit for our families. Many across this province are working hard for their loved ones, and we in this Legislature are doing our utmost to ensure that that be the case for our neighbours and families as well. Many will go about their business across the province to better our lives and to improve the lives of those they love, as I mentioned, and the measures in this bill would help bring those to a reality. If it passes, it would go a long way to support them to support each other.

Mr. Speaker, we recognize the extent of work and effort that all of us in this Legislature do for the benefit of others, and I would just like commend the efforts that many are taking to do just that. If I look at the fiscal

plan—and that's what this is about: This economic update and this bill are about enhancing and bringing forward the work that we did in the 2016 budget. As we move forward, let's be clear about some of the achievements that have been had and certainly the challenges that are still before us. But if you look—and I'm just going to talk about some of the fiscal numbers, specifically—our net-debt-to-GDP ratio, which is a measure of our ability to afford the things that matter to us in the long run, is hovering around 40%. You can compare that with Quebec, which is around 52%, and if you look at what is happening in other parts of the world, it's 80% to 100%.

So Ontario has had some movement and we have had some flexibility to enable that, but keep in mind that the accumulated deficit, which is the measure of the deficits that have been had since the start of time in this Legislature, is the same today as it was 25 years ago. We're roughly at around 27%. That's a strong measure that we're operating effectively and that you are not borrowing for your operating costs. We don't mind borrowing for capital so that we can invest long-term. That's the kind of legacy we want to leave for future generations. We have taken into consideration those two issues.

We have to ensure that we continue to be mindful of our program spending as well, without sacrificing the things that matter. That's why we're investing more in health care: an addition \$1 billion. That's why we've increased operating supports for health care this year by \$140 million, which is part of this bill, on top of the \$365 million that was put forward in the budget in the spring. These are matters that are important to the people of Ontario. It is why we're offering free tuition to 150,000 more students who are going to start in September. That's important for them to get a start in life, recognizing that the sticker shock of tuition oftentimes precludes those most vulnerable and unable to access post-secondary. This is enabling them to be at their best, because, ultimately, what enables us to succeed in this province is having, appropriately, talented, skilled individuals to be prepared for the jobs of tomorrow. We'll continue to make those initiatives and those efforts.

I recognize the importance of education, health care and creating jobs for our economy. An individual who is working hard on our behalf to forward those very issues is a young man himself who has taken on the role of doing work in this Legislature for the benefit of the people of Ontario.

I would like to pass along now an opportunity for Yvan Baker, the MPP from Etobicoke and the parliamentary assistant to the Ministry of Finance, to also enlighten us.

Over to you, sir.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I recognize the member from Etobicoke Centre.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Thank you, Minister. It's an honour to rise today and to speak to this really important and, I think, impactful piece of legislation.

Before I get into the legislation itself, I just wanted to say a few words to put this into context. First of all, I

have to say that it's an honour to be Minister Sousa's parliamentary assistant. When I was campaigning, knocking on doors and meeting constituents, I heard a lot from people about the importance of making sure that we manage the province's finances effectively; that we make those investments that are important to people, the ones that I know the minister has just spoken about; but also that we balance the budget and we manage taxpayer dollars wisely. This was something that I heard regularly at the doors on the campaign, and I know a lot of us heard that. Coming from a business and finance background, it's a true honour to work with Minister Sousa on a daily basis on those issues and many others.

The other thing that I wanted to share was that I was raised in a family where I spent a lot of time with my grandparents growing up. My grandfather—who, like so many immigrants, struggled to establish himself in this country, but did—talked a lot about what made Canada so great was the fact that the generations that came prior to me, to us, worked so hard to build this country, to make it the great country that it is and make our province the great province that it is. He said, “It's your responsibility”—this was when I was still young—“to work to make the province even better. That's what previous generations did, and the onus is on you to do the same.” I share that with you, Mr. Speaker, because I believe that this bill takes an important step in doing just that.

As Minister Sousa articulated so well, the fall bill reflects the decisions we are making as part of our commitment to help people in their everyday lives across Ontario. It reaffirms our commitment to grow the economy and support job creation. It is laying the groundwork to accelerate the development of an innovation economy. Our plan to help people in their everyday lives and to grow the economy and create jobs is working. The province is expected to remain among the leading economies in Canada over the next two years.

Just recently, a report by the Bank of Montreal reiterated that Ontario is expected to grow faster than the national average. In other words, the economy is performing well. The report stated:

“Ontario's economy is one of Canada's growth leaders, expected to outperform the national average for a third straight year in 2016.

“Ontario's real gross domestic product is expected to grow 2.6% this year and 2.3% in 2017.”

This is proof that our plan is working—a plan founded on building Ontario up and centred on our work of fostering a dynamic and innovative business climate.

Today, Ontario's labour market continues to grow, with more than 641,000 net new jobs created since the last global recession. Today, the unemployment rate is at an eight-year low, proof that the plan is having a positive impact on Ontario's economy.

At the same time, our plan is also taking care of Ontarians in their everyday lives. It includes improving protections for consumers, investors and pension plan beneficiaries. I would like to highlight some of the key

components of that plan that are reflected in the bill that is under discussion today.

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First of all, Ontario is moving forward with a new statute to establish the proposed Financial Services Regulatory Authority of Ontario, FSRA for short. The FSRA would regulate the sectors defined in the Financial Services Commission of Ontario Act, 1997. The financial services sector is a significant part of the economy and touches the everyday lives of Ontarians. I'm talking about areas that have real impact on people—real impact on the people who are at home watching right now—on insurance, on mortgages, loans and trusts, credit unions and not to forget pension plan sponsors and plan administrators that are part of the regulated sector. People entrust their futures to these institutions. We entrust our futures to these institutions.

Today in Ontario, more than 85,000 businesses and individuals working in the financial services sector are regulated or registered with the Financial Services Commission of Ontario, or FSCO. Among these 85,000 businesses or individuals, there are:

- 321 insurance companies;
- sponsors and administrators of 7,054 pension plans;
- 101 credit unions and caisses populaires;
- 53 loan and trust corporations;
- 1,188 mortgage brokerages;
- 2,681 mortgage brokers;
- 10,893 mortgage agents;
- 166 mortgage administrators—Speaker, I'm not going to test you on this later, I promise;
- 1,779 co-operative corporations;
- 52,925 insurance agents;
- 5,693 corporate insurance agencies;
- 1,505 insurance adjusters; and
- 4,479 accident benefits health service providers.

When you break it down, you see how many Ontarians can be touched by these 85,000 businesses and individuals. This touches real people and affects their day-to-day lives and financial welfare.

Furthermore, FSCO also reviews and approves auto insurance rates, which provide the basis for the premiums paid by Ontario consumers on more than seven million personal vehicles. FSCO also monitors and ensures compliance with legislated minimum standards for more than 7,000 employment pension plans, with 3.9 million members.

For example, in 2014 more than 250,000 life insurance policies were purchased in Ontario, usually through a FSCO-licensed insurance agent. Ontario's mortgage brokerages reported that they arranged \$148 billion of mortgage business in 2014. Ontario consumers rely every day on services offered by financial services intermediaries licensed by FSCO.

Meanwhile, the Deposit Insurance Corporation of Ontario, known as DICO for short, protects the deposits of the approximately 1.6 million Ontario credit union members. Credit unions and caisses populaires are member-owned, deposit-taking institutions that provide

loans and other financial services to their members. Caisses populaires focus their services on French-speaking communities.

I have to say, Speaker, that in Etobicoke, and in Etobicoke Centre, I have a large number of constituents who rely on the services of credit unions every single day. In fact, my family—my grandfather and my parents—have been members of credit unions for decades.

Ontario's credit unions have provided \$42 billion in loans outstanding to Ontario households and businesses as of June 2016. Furthermore, approximately 7,000 Ontarians are employed by these institutions.

In short, Ontarians rely on agencies such as FSCO, DICO and the related Financial Services Tribunal to ensure that they are adequately protected in their everyday lives. The government recognizes the important regulatory role these agencies have served. With many different touch points between consumers, financial services and pension administrators, the role of these agencies is fundamental in protecting the public.

Financial services are one of the fastest-growing sectors in our economy, and that is why the province is moving forward to establish the initial parameters for the proposed Financial Services Regulatory Authority of Ontario. Our intention is for the FSRA, for short, to be a strong, modern and efficient financial services and pension regulator that will benefit Ontarians by protecting the interests of consumers and pension plan beneficiaries while fostering a strong business environment.

I want to restate that, Speaker, because I think it's really important what the goal is of the FSRA: It's to protect the interest of consumers and pension plan beneficiaries while also fostering a strong business environment, an important balance to strike. Overseeing these areas is a public trust that our government takes seriously and we want to ensure that robust consumer and pension plan beneficiary protections are in place. We will make sure that we have a modern financial services and pension regulator.

The next topic, Speaker, that I want to speak to, and that's contained in the statute, can be seen as a midway point in the rigorous process to create the proposed financial services regulator of Ontario. This is a process that began in early 2015. That year, we appointed an expert advisory panel to review the mandates of the existing agencies. The panel consisted of George Cooke, the former president and CEO of the Dominion of Canada General Insurance Company and chair of the board of directors of the OMERS Administration Corp.; James Daw, former Toronto Star personal finance columnist, who has written extensively about all facets of Ontario's financial system; and Larry Ritchie from Osler, Hoskin and Harcourt LLP, partner and former vice-chair of the Ontario Securities Commission—so a group of individuals with tremendous experience and knowledge of the sector.

The panel conducted consultations and drafted and released both an interim report and then its final report this past June. The government had tasked the group to

answer four specific questions, and the questions focused on the relevance, responsibilities, powers and governance of the three agencies. They concluded that significant change was required, in part because the financial services and pension sectors are changing at a rapid pace. To keep pace, they argued that Ontario needed a regulatory authority that is flexible and innovative and that possesses the expertise appropriate to match the consistently evolving financial environment. In short, the agency's effectiveness was limited by a list of items outside their control, such as mandate, authorities and resources. They called not for amendments, revisions or improvements to the existing regulatory framework and apparatus; they called for replacing the current regulatory structure and approach with one that would be more flexible and also more accountable.

In their report, they stated clearly that they do not believe the necessary transformation could be accomplished within the current system that's in place. They recommended the creation of a new regulator. They said that this new regulator required a new mandate and the authority to work closely with the sectors that they regulate, as well as with sister agencies in other provinces, if they were to encourage a vibrant and safe marketplace. To ensure consumers, investors and pension plan beneficiaries are well protected today and tomorrow and that the industry is competitive and responsible to consumers' needs today and tomorrow, Ontario needed change. It needed significant change to the mandate, governance, organizational structure, regulatory tools and overall regulatory means.

In its report, the panel made 44 recommendations, all relating to these fundamental functions. Overall, the report's message was that Ontario's current regulatory framework was not sufficiently flexible, adaptable or responsive. The expert panel clearly highlighted FSCO's structural limitations, which create challenges in regulating financial services in the pension sector in an area of rapid industry innovation caused by competition and consumer change. The report was clear and unwavering: Change is needed.

Speaker, consumer changes and industry innovation are proceeding very rapidly, as we have seen in the sharing economy. For example, two or three years ago, few had heard of Uber and Airbnb, and today they're household names. Innovation within the financial services sector is inevitable, necessary, and actually desirable. Innovation will drive competition. This dynamic, together with ever-changing demands from consumers and investors, will require an innovative, flexible, adaptable and responsive regulatory environment. In other words, if the financial services sector is going to innovate and adapt, we need to make sure that the regulator can keep pace.

Our government is committed to modernizing and strengthening financial services and pension regulation, as well as providing consumer protections, which is why we will establish the new recommended Financial Services Regulatory Authority of Ontario. But it needs to be said that how the panel's recommendations will be

implemented requires further analysis. As stressed by the expert panel, we know that the transition from the current structure to the panel's recommended approach needs to be carefully and strategically planned, implemented and overseen with due regard for its impact on registered pension plans and on plan beneficiaries.

If passed, the legislation before us today would enable the government to appoint a board of directors that would govern the FSRA. The government will work with the bargaining agents to ensure that FSCO employees are treated in accordance with the applicable collective agreements during the transition to the FSRA. Our government will ensure that FSCO continues to provide regulatory oversight until the FSRA is fully operational.

The panel also recommended that the FSRA be funded on a cost-recovery basis through appropriate levies and fees paid by the regulated sectors. If the implementation goes according to plan, the FSRA would be set up as a corporation that is operationally independent from the government and that is funded on a cost-recovery basis through appropriate levies and fees paid by the regulated sectors.

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This model is similar to others that are out there, regulators such as the Ontario Securities Commission, as an example. The establishment of the FSRA would represent an important first step towards the panel's vision for modernizing and strengthening the regulation for the financial services under its oversight and pensions in Ontario.

In short, we are looking at a major overhaul to the regulatory landscape, with a modernized governance and accountability framework. In the coming months, the government intends to take other important steps in support of this multi-phased transition process, such as the development of a detailed implementation plan.

Mr. Speaker, the province's efforts relating to FSRA are not the only work it is doing to modernize how financial services are regulated in Ontario. We are also working to promote clarity and consumer confidence in the sector. I'd like to spend a couple of moments speaking about that as well. Our steps include reviewing the regulation of financial planning and financial advisory services.

It is an understatement to say that the financial decisions confronting individuals have become increasingly complicated and increasingly complex. So, as a result, many people need access to informed professional financial advice to ensure that their investment decisions serve their financial goals. Currently in Ontario, no general oversight framework exists to regulate the activities of individuals who offer financial advice and planning services. The absence of a general regulatory framework for financial planning has raised concerns. It has raised concerns about proficiency, quality standards and potential conflicts of interest in the industry. This potential regulatory gap could leave consumers vulnerable when looking for assistance to meet their financial goals.

Last year, the Ontario government took an important step in appointing an independent expert committee to review the regulatory framework relating to financial planning and financial advisory services. This committee was mandated to provide advice and recommendations to the government regarding whether financial planning and the giving of financial advice should be regulated in Ontario and, if so, the appropriate scope of such regulation. The goal is for consumers to get trustworthy planning and advisory services so they can be confident in the advice they receive when they face complex financial decisions with confidence.

When I think about the decisions that people make about their financial future, and I think about how many Ontarians rely on this type of financial advice and how those decisions are pivotal to their future prosperity, to the future prosperity of their families, how it's fundamental to ensuring that people can achieve their potential, retire securely, support their families—it's really, really important that we get this right. It's really important that people can rely on that advice and have confidence in that advice.

The expert committee I was talking about said it would ensure that its recommendations avoid imposing unnecessary or duplicative regulation. As part of the consultation process, the expert committee travelled across the province to solicit stakeholder input on exactly how to do this. Their final report is expected to be released in early 2017.

Another area of note in the fall economic statement is syndicated mortgages. The Financial Services Commission of Ontario, FSCO for short, which regulates mortgage brokers involved in Ontario's syndicated mortgage market, reports that syndicated mortgage lending in Ontario almost doubled, from \$3 billion annually to close to \$6 billion annually, between 2012 and 2015 alone. As the size of the market has increased, the types of investors participating have changed, with syndicated mortgage investments increasingly marketed to smaller-scale and to retail investors. In this evolving context, changes were suggested to the way that syndicated mortgages are regulated. In particular, the expert advisory panel that reviewed FSCO's mandate recommended that syndicated mortgage-offering documents should be subject to the same level of regulation that the securities regulator applies to other offering documents used to raise capital in Ontario.

The expert panel's recommendation fits together with a suggestion made by the participating jurisdictions in the Cooperative Capital Markets Regulatory System. These jurisdictions include the governments of British Columbia, New Brunswick, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, Saskatchewan, Yukon and the government of Canada.

In August 2015, last year, they proposed that the Capital Markets Regulatory Authority, when formed, would be responsible for the regulation of those offering syndicated mortgage investments. The government is taking steps to ensure that strong investor protection is provided under the regulatory framework for such prod-

ucts. As an initial step, the Ministry of Finance recently established a working group composed of representatives from the ministry and experts from the Ontario Securities Commission and FSCO. It is expected that over the coming months, the working group will develop recommendations for the government's consideration. The fall economic statement indicated that the government will announce further actions by the spring of 2017.

I've talked about a number of items here. I've talked about the regulatory authority; I've talked about syndicated mortgages. I also want to talk about credit unions and caisses populaires. The bill before us today also supports the government's related work having to do with modernizing the regulation of the province's credit unions and caisses populaires. In the 2016 budget, the government announced it intended to implement the recommendations contained in the report on the review of the Credit Unions and Caisses Populaires Act, 1994. The review was led by my predecessor as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance, and now minister, Laura Albanese.

Speaker, as you know, Ms. Albanese is now Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. In her role as parliamentary assistant, she was asked by Minister Sousa, back in the fall of 2014, to undertake the review of the Credit Unions and Caisses Populaires Act. The act has been amended over the years, with the previous significant amendments being made in 2009. A review of the Credit Unions and Caisses Populaires Act is something that must be done every five years just to keep it current. This is an imperative undertaking for the Ministry of Finance.

As part of her review, Minister Albanese did a number of things. She looked at the impact that the act and its regulations have on the day-to-day operations of credit unions and caisses populaires in their dealings with their members. She solicited public input through an open consultation process. Working together with Ministry of Finance officials and Osgoode Hall Law School professor Poonam Puri, her expert adviser, she held eight in-person consultations across Ontario. Additionally, they met one on one with individuals and held two round table sessions with key sector participants. As well, stakeholders in the public submitted more than 35 written responses to a consultation paper issued to stimulate that conversation. All together, they heard from more than 2,020 individuals across Ontario. These people included credit union members, small-business owners, local chambers of commerce and sector representatives. Input from everyone was considered carefully and was reflected in Minister Albanese's 15 recommendations.

After her work was completed, Minister Albanese observed that what really became clear to her over the course of the review was the pivotal role that credit unions play in their communities. She heard repeatedly about the positive contributions that credit unions and caisses populaires have made in northern, rural and urban communities, and their importance to their communities remains unmistakable and unshakable. Credit unions are vital to the communities that they serve.

I just want to offer an example. In northern communities where banks have closed branches, credit unions and caisses populaires have often stepped up and are the only remaining financial institutions in the community. In urban centres, ethnic credit unions assist members in their native languages. I can speak to that specifically. In my community, we have many, many members who are served, for example, by the Ukrainian Credit Union, by the Buduchnist Credit Union. These are the credit unions that I refer to that my grandparents and mother were members of. They not only provide an essential service to their members and to those communities, but they also give back to their local communities. They take their resources, they take their profits and they contribute back into the communities in a way that's quite exceptional. To that extent, they also provide a vital service to their communities. Of course, they create sustained and good-quality local jobs, the backbone of any community.

However, in Minister Albanese's report, she noted that credit union revenues were under strain. They're under strain due to Canada's low interest rates and rules that could pose challenges to them. As a result, many credit unions are looking to pursue new and innovative lines of business in order to generate non-interest income. Credit unions and caisses populaires are vibrant and dynamic businesses. They compete for clients and strive to satisfy the needs of their members. They are looking to grow and compete more effectively in the modern financial services sector. The amendments contained in this bill go a long way towards ensuring that credit unions and caisses populaires can continue to provide those vital and competitive services.

Minister Albanese's 15 recommendations serve three overarching objectives: (1) protecting consumers; (2) encouraging best practices; and (3) enabling credit unions and caisses populaires to meet their members' evolving needs.

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Let me talk first of all about protecting consumers. While credit union and caisses populaires members are well served, the province can do more to ensure their best interests as consumers continue to be soundly protected. The report recommended a number of things:

- increasing the basic deposit insurance coverage limit, to \$250,000 from \$100,000, to better protect consumers in the event a credit union becomes insolvent;

- seeking voluntary commitments from credit unions to provide data on member complaints to the Financial Services Commission of Ontario;

- increasing credit union and caisses populaires transparency and accountability through published public accountability statements and notices of branch closures; and

- exploring with the sector new product offerings as alternatives to high-cost payday loans to help consumers find more sustainable financial solutions.

The minister underlined that in recent years there have been significant developments internationally in financial services regulation. It is important that Ontario remains

aligned with international best practices. It is now evident that new best practices have emerged, in particular with respect to governance and capital adequacy. It is important to ensure that Ontario is aligned with those standards. In that vein, she recommended a number of things, including that they update their capital adequacy requirements to match federal and international financial standards.

Thirdly, in the area of enabling credit unions to meet evolving member needs, Minister Albanese underlined that the financial services sector is a competitive and evolving marketplace. By updating the Credit Unions Act, Ontario would help credit unions better meet their needs today and in the future while helping them compete more effectively. Therefore, she recommended a number of things:

- identifying and amending regulations under other provincial statutes that limit the types of business that credit unions can conduct with a variety of sectors, including municipalities, universities, school boards and hospitals, in order to put them on a more equal footing with banks;

- removing restrictive rules for small credit unions to give them the same flexibility in lending, investment and managing liquidity as large credit unions;

- allowing credit unions to wholly own a broader array of subsidiary businesses than is currently permitted, including insurance brokerages; and

- permitting loan syndications with credit unions in other provinces to help Ontario credit unions better fund local needs and manage risk through greater diversification of their loan portfolios.

These are all changes that the minister recommended in this third category that really allows credit unions to compete, to survive and prosper, to serve their members and their communities more effectively. With these recommendations, Minister Albanese was confident that new legislation would bring forward the right ideas that will improve the legislative framework for credit unions and caisses populaires.

As a first step, the government is proposing amendments to the act that would provide authority to set different deposit insurance limits for different insurable deposits, therefore enabling regulations to be proposed to set the deposit insurance coverage limit for non-registered deposits at \$250,000. That's the first thing. The second thing is to remove differentiated rules for small credit unions, and the third is to permit credit unions to enter into loan syndication agreements with credit unions in other provinces.

The government will also propose amendments to regulations under the act and other relevant statutes that would further implement the above measures and would do a number of things: permit credit unions to establish or acquire a corporation that is an insurance agent or a registered insurance broker; and address provisions and regulations under various statutes to include credit unions as permissible financial institutions.

Implementing these changes, Speaker, would help improve the legislative framework for credit unions so

that they can meet the evolving needs of their members, contribute to the Ontario economy and ensure that deposits continue to be well-protected.

Ontario's continued economic growth has occurred in the face of intensified international competition and uncertainty around global growth forecasts. From reducing regulatory burdens to helping businesses keep pace with technological change and expand their operations, the province is improving the conditions for economic growth, now and into the future. Ontario needs to be a destination of choice for businesses looking to set down roots and grow their firms.

Looking ahead to the new opportunities resulting from the transition to a low-carbon economy, the government is implementing its plan to combat climate change and support individuals and businesses. Attracting and supporting investment in financial technology sectors will also provide significant new economic opportunities. It is our responsibility to put in place the regulations and supports needed to make those opportunities a reality in Ontario.

The province is also committed to further strengthening consumer protection and ensuring a fair, safe and informed marketplace for all Ontario families, because we recognize that changing economic and social realities are affecting how Ontarians work, live and conduct business. To enhance consumer protection in Ontario's financial services marketplace, the government is doing a number of things: first of all, exploring options with credit unions to offer small-dollar loans as another option to high-cost payday loans; working with the sector to identify and address any potential legislative or other barriers to offering such products; and exploring with credit unions ways to reduce cheque-cashing costs for recipients of government payments.

The government has also completed the delivery of key reforms to improve the auto insurance system, including launching a new auto insurance dispute resolution system that will help the people of Ontario get faster access to the benefits that they need, reducing the maximum interest rate for monthly premium payment plans and prohibiting rate increases for minor at-fault accidents.

Ontario will continue to seek opportunities to improve the auto insurance system to benefit and to protect consumers. We will do so with the help of David Marshall, the former president and chief executive officer of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, who was appointed by the province as an adviser on auto insurance and on pensions. He is currently reviewing the system to identify ways to improve health outcomes and lower insurer claims costs. Ultimately, this will make auto insurance rates more affordable for Ontarians. I know that this will make a difference for the people in my community of Etobicoke Centre and for people in communities across Ontario.

In conclusion, the proposed Bill 70, the Building Ontario Up for Everyone Act, 2016, would implement, in part, measures contained in the 2016 Ontario budget by

amending various statutes and enacting four new statutes. It's an important bill. It is a document that reflects our common desire to make Ontario the best place for people to work, the best place to raise a family and pursue what makes them happy in life, wherever they live in this great province.

When I started, I started by talking about the fact that when I was young, I was told by my family, by my grandparents, how important it is that, as citizen of this province, as a citizen of this country, I have a responsibility to continue the work of prior generations in making this province, making this country, a better place to live. As an MPP, that responsibility is my everyday focus.

I'm proud to support this bill, because this bill takes important steps to strengthen our economy, to create jobs, to protect consumers, to ensure that the services that Ontarians need are provided and, ultimately, that we make this province and this country even better than it has been in the past and for generations to come. Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm glad to speak to Bill 70. We had a little bit of a challenge getting some time to review the bill before we could comment. We did get that from the government. We had to table a reasoning on it. It's good to have some time so that we were able to prep for this. I know in our lead we're going to be looking forward to giving the government comments and criticism and hopefully some feedback on what they're proposing.

There are areas in Bill 70 that touch all of us, and health care is one of them. I was in committee yesterday with Bill 41, putting patients first, and that particular bill is very concerning. There were stakeholders there who were worried about the powers the LHINs were going to have over their agencies. The CEOs from CCAC are going to be appointed through the LHINs and they're going to be able to go into community agency health groups and basically run the show. There are concerns about that because the community agencies, the health groups there—they know their areas. They've been appointed to the board, they've been elected to the board, and the concern was that those people with the LHINs, through the CCAC, that were CEOs, weren't appointed. They're not accountable; they're unelected. And so that is something that was flagged.

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When we talk about health care, it's probably one of the biggest budget items in Ontario that we have to make sure we get right, and there's many times that I have spoken in this House about things that need to change and concerns around mental health. That's still one of the things I'm very passionate about.

I look forward to looking at Bill 70 in more depth with regard to the health care piece and having comments on that in the future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I'm delighted to rise and speak to this bill. I want to thank the Minister of Finance as well as the parliamentary assistant, the MPP for Etobicoke Centre, for their comments.

I noticed that the PCs relinquished their opportunity to rebut, so I'm going to take that as a sign that they agreed with everything that our side had to propose. So I really thank you for that. Thank you for that unqualified support from the Progressive Conservatives.

I also noticed that the NDP member decided to use her time to actually talk about the patients first bill and not the budget, so I will defer my comments on that issue, should I get the opportunity to debate the patients-first bill, which talks about delegating authority to the LHIN.

But I support this budget wholeheartedly for a very simple reason, and that is because—

Interjection.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: Sorry, the Building Ontario Up for Everyone Act (Budget Measures), 2016. I do believe that the best policy, the best economic policy, the best policy for us, is good jobs, and that's what this bill is about. This is about bringing good jobs to Ontario.

Our track record so far has been stellar. Business investment in Ontario has increased by 0.6% in the second quarter of 2016 and 0.9% in the first quarter. I think there will be no quarrel in this House when I say that Ontario is leading Canada when it comes to job creation.

We're doing something right, Mr. Speaker. That is what is at the heart of our government and this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm proud to get up and speak for a few moments to Bill 70.

There's a section in the bill that's really what I want to speak to that deals with the election of the regional chairs in some of our regions in the province of Ontario. A couple of questions would come in: the fact that in all of the others that have it, it was decided by the local regions if they wanted to elect a regional chair or if they wanted to appoint a regional chair. I think there are only three of the regions that presently have an appointed chair. The question, of course, would come: Why is the minister putting it in the finance bill to change that when, in fact, the same day, the Minister of Municipal Affairs introduced a municipal bill that deals with the composition of those regional councils? But this is not part of that bill. That's a question I would have liked to ask the minister.

I've also spent the last two days at committee on another bill where I've been working on trying to get the government to allow the minister to come and talk to the committee, because in the debates in the House, we all realize—to the Minister of Finance—that the minister makes his statement, but there's no opportunity to have a back-and-forth to get an explanation of what's happening. I'm told at committee that the government feels that in the House is enough debate on the bill. But the question I just asked—and maybe we can get it in the reply to the comment. You need the minister to come to

committee to talk with us so you can ask questions and have a discussion as to what it actually means. So I would ask the minister, when this bill is finished, if it would go to committee so in fact we could have this discussion of what is in the bill.

On that one, I just want to say that it includes the word "Oxford," and that's what caught my attention, or I would likely never have seen it. But, in fact, it exempts Oxford from exactly the same thing because the Oxford regional chair, or warden, is appointed by council. I understand why it was taken out, and that's not a question. I was there when that happened. But I do appreciate his presentation. I would hope that we get to committee and talk about some of these things that are in the bill that are not explained quite as well in the presentation—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much. Time is up.

Further questions and comments?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's always a pleasure to rise and add the voice of my constituents from Windsor West. Today I have two minutes on Bill 70, the Building Ontario Up for Everyone Act. I can tell you that the people of Windsor and Essex county don't believe that this government is actually building Ontario up for everyone. All you have to do is look at their hydro bills and the skyrocketing cost of hydro. What they're actually doing is driving people down into poverty. They're not building them up.

There's a line here in the little booklet that we were given that talks about "more than 641,000 net new jobs have been created since the depths of the 2008 global recession." My question is: How many are of those jobs are good-paying, full-time jobs? How many of them pay a living wage?

Interjection: Permanent.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: Permanent jobs that pay a living wage: How many of those? Because what we're seeing is a move to unstable—or, as we call it in this House, precarious—work, those that are making a minimum wage that can't survive, can't put food on the table, can't provide the extras like extracurricular activities, sports and such for their children. We have people deciding whether they're going to buy their medications or pay their hydro bill. As we go into the winter season, we have those that have electric heat that cannot afford to turn that heat on because of the cost of hydro.

So we have a minister on the side who is grinning and heckling me, and that's fine. Clearly she's out of touch with what's going on with the people across the province. She thinks it's funny that there are people that are living in poverty and can't afford to have heat in the winter and can't afford to pay for their children. But I would really like the government to talk about what those 641,000 jobs really are and if they're paying a living wage.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments—sorry, forgive me. Sorry, Minister. Back to the Minister of Finance for final comments.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I appreciate the comments by all members of the House and reflection on Bill 70 as we move forward with this fall economic bill. There are a lot of things in this bill. I am going to respond to both questions of the members opposite. But let me again reaffirm: This is about us coming to balance to ensure that we maintain a very disciplined and determined approach to our program spending, and to ensure that we continue to stimulate economic growth so that we do come to balance. And we are. We're taking the necessary steps to ensure that no one is left behind; to invest heavily in the things that matter the most to people—building new hospitals, ensuring more children go to universities and colleges—and to ensure we have a strong premise by which we can grow the economy and enable those jobs to be created.

I'll reflect on that one question: 94% of the 641,000 net new jobs, after we capture the 280,000 jobs that we lost in the recession plus the additional jobs that were created in new value-added industries, in new manufacturing, in agri-food processing and a wide sector of the economy that's enabling us to weather those commodity shocks that are now evident in Alberta and in the east coast—Ontario has led the way with the lowest unemployment in eight years. The majority of those jobs, 94% of those jobs—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Stop the clock, please.

We're in final comments from the minister. I would ask that we quietly listen to his final comments. I direct this not just to the opposition side but to all of members in the Legislature to allow him an opportunity to finish.

Back to you, Minister.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Thank you, Speaker. Obviously, the heckling only reflects their desire not to listen to what's actually the facts as opposed to the spin. So here it is: 94% of those jobs that are being created are permanent, are in high-value industries and higher-than-average income. That's important for our prosperity.

We also want that growth to be more inclusive. We want everybody to appreciate and enjoy some of those opportunities that are existing in our marketplace in the province of Ontario. It's why we're continuing to take the necessary steps. It's why we introduced the basic income pilot, so that no one is left behind in those initiatives. The member opposite made no reference to the fact that we're looking at ways to help those who are in poverty and ensure that we continue to grow the economy for all concerned.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Good morning, Speaker. While I do have an hour to speak, there are about five minutes left on the clock, so I'm going to spend this time maybe talking a little bit more about what this government left off.

They had 10 extra minutes to speak and they didn't, and I can tell you why. It's because we're on to them.

We're on to them, Speaker. They have told so many things in that last almost-hour they had to speak that, quite frankly, what they say is 180 degrees opposite from the facts.

I can tell you, just as a for instance, in the minister's own comments here, where he was talking about these net new jobs and he was talking about the 94%—I go back to the minister's own department, which released an internal Ministry of Finance document that we received. This is a direct quote to talk about these net new jobs that the minister claims are some record-breaking numbers: "There are fewer jobs today relative to the population than before the recession." It continues to say, "In other words"—he's explaining it to the minister now—"employment growth has not kept up with the growth of the working-age population."

They're throwing out a number to the people, except they're forgetting the fact that our population has grown as well, and so—

Interjection.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, I'm sorry you might not be able to hear me over the minister heckling just after he commented about someone else heckling. Maybe I'll repeat this, then. Maybe he didn't hear me.

His own Ministry of Finance document stated, "There are fewer jobs today relative to the population." We've had a spike in our population. We've had job growth that did not keep up with that. The letter to the minister from his staff goes on say, "In other words, employment growth has not kept up with the growth of the ... population." They tell you one thing, but we know from their own internal documents that the complete opposite of that is correct.

When you have this kind of statement from the minister, the parliamentary assistant and the other ministers here who are defending that, when you have a statement like that, that we now know from their own internal documents is completely opposite from reality—when you can't trust a statement like that, how can you possibly trust anything, anything at all that this government says, when they can't give you the real story about something as critical as our growth in jobs? They tell you one thing when their own ministry is telling you something completely opposite to that.

We know that there is a trust deficit with this government. Through the Financial Accountability Officer, we also know there's a financial deficit. Both are very serious deficits to have. Now, I know that we can continue to talk about their trust deficit, because five OPP investigations, charges flying all over the place—we know there's a deficit of trust in this government. But we should hope to be able to at least trust what they say, and we've now learned, yet again today after this blatant example of telling the public one thing when their own documents tell us something completely different—how can we ever trust a word this government says?

I'll continue my 55 minutes when the bill is called later this week.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): It is now 10:15. This House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'd like to welcome to Queen's Park today, on behalf of the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex and myself, Barb Phillips and Michael Gibbons, real estate agents who are here with OREA. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'm very pleased to welcome Frenchman's Bay Public School students here today. I want to give a special shout-out to Jordanna, who lives around the corner from me. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to welcome to Queen's Park today, from the Ontario real estate board in my area of Sarnia-Lambton, Donna Mathewson and Hugh Brignell, two long-time members of the real estate board.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to welcome members of the Southwestern Ontario Gleaners here today: chair of the board Tina Quiring and her husband, Neal; past chair and chair of the fundraising committee Vern Toews and his wife, Elizabeth; and vice-chair Peter Fiss and his wife, Helen.

The Southwestern Ontario Gleaners are an inter-denominational not-for-profit organization that provides free dehydrated food for organizations that are warranted. I encourage people to come and visit them this afternoon.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Our page captain today is Adrian Rassaf, and joining us in the members' gallery are his parents, Sabine and Mehdi Rassaf, from the great riding of Oak Ridges-Markham.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Speaker, two things: I don't know whether the representatives are here, but we all wish to congratulate the new president of the OFA, Keith Currie.

Secondly, as you know, the Ontario Real Estate Association is here. We wish to welcome Matt Thornton, Amie Ferris, and her husband, the president of OREA, Ray Ferris.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Mr. Speaker, please join me in welcoming two incredible and inspiring people who have travelled from KW to be here at Queen's Park today: Shawn Johnston, who is the winner of a 2016 J. S. Woodsworth Award and the coordinator at the Waterloo Aboriginal Education Centre; and Lila Bruyere, who is Shawn's mother and also a graduate of Wilfrid Laurier University's social work program. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I'd like to welcome to Queen's Park Jon Tondeur from the great riding of Northumberland-Quinte West. On behalf of the Northumberland and Quinte real estate associations, I'd like to welcome Diane Chapman, Janette Laffin and Natasha Huizinga. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I'd like to direct everyone's attention to the members' west gallery. We have, from

the Southwestern Ontario Gleaners, Joel Epp, who is the production manager; Alison Klassen, the administrator, and her husband, Henry; Vern and Elizabeth Toews; Peter and Helen Fiss; and Neal and Tina Quiring.

Also, Speaker, while I'm standing, I'd like to introduce Tim Schindel from British Columbia, and Ted Seres, who is a good friend of mine from Cambridge, also in the members' gallery.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'd like to welcome the members from CUPE 4914 who are here with their president, Sonia Yung, and a lot of her members, along with Fred Hahn, the Ontario president, and secretary-treasurer Candace Rennick.

Hon. Bill Mauro: The College Student Alliance is here today. I was pleased to have breakfast with them this morning, and I've got three members representing my college in my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan who are here today: Jodi Connor, the president of the student union of Confederation College; Madison Schell, the vice-president-external of the student union of Confederation College; and Sam Abraham, director of social events, student union of Confederation College.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I'd like to also welcome to Queen's Park CUPE Ontario president Fred Hahn, secretary-treasurer Candace Rennick, CUPE Local 4914 president Sonia Yung, and many of her members from Peel children's aid who are in the public gallery to watch question period today.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to welcome to the Legislature today four members of CUPE Local 4914 at the Peel region children's aid society who have been on strike for over two months. Welcome to Helen Moore, Tom Davinett, Lisa McDavid and Carrie Lynn Poole-Colnam. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I'd like to welcome two sets of guests today. I'd like to begin, also, to lend my voice and welcome CUPE Ontario president Fred Hahn, secretary-treasurer Candace Rennick, CUPE Local 4914 president Sonia Yung and many members of CUPE Local 4914 at Peel children's aid who are in the public gallery.

It is also my pleasure to welcome to the members' gallery our friends from the Ontario Real Estate Association. I would like to thank Mississauga realtors Ray Dubash, Asha Singh and Tehreem Kamal for attending question period today.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I'd like to welcome to Queen's Park three members from OREA who I met with this morning: Paul Martin, Adam Rayner and Stephanie Ballantyne.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'd like to welcome today one of the Southwestern Ontario Gleaners. She's from Kingsville and has her law office in Windsor. She's Tamara Stomp. She made the soup today, Speaker, so come to the luncheon reception with the gleaners.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Today is a very special day. We have the College Student Alliance here with us. I want to say thank you to those students and welcome them here.

Also, the Southwestern Ontario Gleaners are an amazing group: Dennis and Vicki Dick, Philip and Sonja Farbota, and Tamara Stomp. Welcome to all the gleaners.

Mr. Michael Harris: I see members of our local real estate association from Kitchener–Waterloo here: Bill Duce, Tania Benninger, Mark Wolle and Charlotte Zawada. Thanks, guys, for coming to question period. Hopefully you enjoy it.

Mr. Yvan Baker: I just want to echo the greeting from Minister Matthews. I'm pleased to rise this morning and welcome to Queen's Park the College Student Alliance, led by their president, Gurpal Singh Bhatia; director of advocacy, Ciara Byrne; the general manager, Jennifer Howarth; and board directors Tiffany Desbiens, Davinder Singh and Rhaili Champaigne; as well as all of their members here today. They're here at the Legislature to meet with all of us, and I'd like to wish them a warm welcome and a wonderful day here at Queen's Park.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I would like to introduce the College Student Alliance and send a warm welcome to two Londoners who have come today under the College Student Alliance: Kevin Kaiser and Carlie Forsythe. Welcome to the Legislature today.

Hon. Glenn Thibeault: I'd like to welcome to the gallery Michelle Beaudry; her father, Michael Beaudry; and of course Matthew Beaudry, who is the star of the Bruce Power ads talking about asthma and the reduction of coal and GHGs. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I want to welcome Jason Craig this morning from the Cornwall firefighters. We had a good talk, and he's here on behalf of the Ontario firefighters' association.

Hon. Laura Albanese: I would like to introduce, on behalf of my neighbouring MPP for Eglinton–Lawrence, Mike Colle, who is not here right now, the guests of page captain William Cross: his parents, Annamaria and David Cross. They are in the public gallery this morning. We want to welcome them to Queen's Park.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'd like to welcome, from the North Bay Real Estate Board, Rhonda Fiddament, Susan Nosko and Irene Smit.

Hon. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I'd like to welcome members of the Ontario Professional Fire Fighter's Association. Here from Halton are Dan VanderLelie, Paul Cunningham, Ralph Baigent, Chuck Lewis and Grant Lawson. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I'd like to welcome a former legislative intern here at Queen's Park, Matthew Thornton, from the Ontario Real Estate Association. Welcome, Matthew.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I would like to welcome, from OREA, Sylvie DesHaies, Christianne Newton from Kingston and the Islands, Colleen Emmerson and Adam Rayner.

Also, from the Ontario firefighters: Ann Bryan. We thank you for your continued work in our community.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I too would like to welcome a firefighter from Sudbury: Mr. Mark Muldoon. Welcome to Queen's Park.

1040

Hon. Chris Ballard: I'd like to welcome Paul Horton, a member of the Central York Professional Firefighters Association, here from Newmarket–Aurora.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Two members from the Windsor real estate association: Kim Gazo and Krista Del Gatto: Welcome to Queen's Park.

Miss Monique Taylor: I would like to welcome all the CUPE members in Local 4914, children's aid workers on strike, who are here today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Before we get started, an observation: The process that was agreed upon by the House leaders was five minutes of time for introductions. I have been flexible, seeing that there were many people in the House, that we would provide an opportunity for all the introductions to take place. I will only continue doing that if we do not have comments made other than to introduce your guests. If I start hearing people making comments—editorials—I will simply stop the clock at five minutes and we'll move on. If you have a point of order to make after that, I will recognize it only as a point of order. If you try to do some more introductions, I'll stop it from happening. It's up to you how you want to use this. I will be flexible if it's used in a way that is respectful for the people coming to visit. Thank you.

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS, AUDITOR GENERAL

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to section 28 of the Auditor General Act, I have laid upon the table the audited financial statements of the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario for the year ended March 31, 2016.

ORAL QUESTIONS

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Deputy Premier. For over a year, a dark cloud of disgrace has hovered above the Premier's office as she staunchly defended Pat Sorbara during the Sudbury by-election bribery scandal. It got worse when the Premier defended the Minister of Energy when he was named in the charges laid by the OPP. Then, shockingly, yesterday in a Sudbury courthouse, a federal crown prosecutor alleged the Minister of Energy "sought certain benefits, offers, jobs or employment as part of his condition to run as an MPP." The prosecutor stated that Thibeault was not charged because it is only illegal to offer a bribe, not seek or accept one. This is startling news. It raises serious ethical questions, and the public, rightfully, is questioning whether they can trust the minister.

Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that the public is concerned about the Minister of Energy. My question is,

will the Premier, will the government do the right thing and force him to resign?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'll just remind the Leader of the Opposition, once again, that we have been very open with the public, with this Legislature, about the allegations related to the Sudbury by-election. Now that charges have been laid, Speaker, we believe—they should believe—that the right place to deal with these charges is in the court. That's where we will leave it. The Legislature is no place to deal with this issue.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, it's almost laughable when the Deputy Premier says "oops" and we only heard about stuff when the members get charged. We only hear about it when we're hearing about ethical examples of breaches, of crossing the line. So, Mr. Speaker, my question is—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. It's not a good start. I'll put it on the record that we'll move to warnings if I have to. I'll do so quickly, if needed. Please finish your question.

Mr. Patrick Brown: I'm going to read a quote from the Premier's speech at the Liberal AGM. She said, "People look at me and many of them think, 'She's not who we thought she was. She's become a typical politician. She'll do anything to win.'" The Premier added, "Frankly, ... I think I sometimes have given them reason to think that." This is one of those examples where you've given people reasons to doubt that this is simply the bad side of politics.

So my question is, if you want to be different, if this government isn't simply another politician, another bad example that causes the public to lose their confidence, why won't they do the right thing and ask the Minister of Energy to resign? There's this ethical cloud that everyone in the province can see except this Liberal government.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, if we want to talk about ethical clouds, maybe you could respond to this ethical cloud: The Leader of the Opposition's chief of staff was recently caught holding secret negotiations with former Scarborough–Rouge River candidate Queenie Yu. The PCs' top aide sent an email to Queenie Yu, flip-flopping again on the sex ed curriculum, the very same day as the deadline for withdrawing a candidate from the race. There are many ethical questions surrounding that.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. While I would like the opposition to come to order, it's not helpful that the government side of the benches are making as much noise—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It continues while I'm speaking.

Finish your answer, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: When asked if the party was trying to convince Yu to withdraw from the race, the PC leader declined to comment. Now I think it's time he comments.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Once again, we have a serious question for the Deputy Premier, and all we get is grasping at straws and diversion techniques. We have a serious case right here. The OPP have laid charges. I don't want political games. I don't want diversions. I want this government to actually answer a question for once in their lives.

I'm going to go back. The minister of the crown is alleged to have sought a bribe from the Premier's deputy chief of staff. Though the matter of Ms. Sorbara is before the court, the matter is of public confidence and is rightfully debated in the Legislature.

The minister has been named in the charges laid by the OPP. He has tarnished his office and shaken the public's confidence in his ability. Stepping down is not an admission of guilt by the Minister of Energy; it is simply the honourable thing to do.

My question once again to the Deputy Premier—and please answer the question—will you ask the Minister of Energy to resign? If not, are you saying that nothing wrong was done by Pat Sorbara or Glenn Thibeault? Yes or no?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I have another question. I know that it's supposed to be question period to me, but I do want say—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. A few of you are pushing me to warnings.

Finish, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: A remarkable coincidence happened on one day in—

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Answer the question that was asked.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Dufferin–Caledon, come to order. If it happens again, we'll go to warnings.

Carry on.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: On that day, the PC member for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock resigned her seat and, on the very same day, accepted a paid position in 2009—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Sarnia–Lambton will come to order.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Hypocrites, hypocrites.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Speaker, I object to that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, come to order.

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Take it outside. I'll join you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, second time.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Municipal Affairs, come to order. We've now chosen to go to warnings. I will issue warnings.

Finish, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The Sudbury Star said, "Scott Trades Seat for Head Office Job."

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Start the clock.

Finish, please.

1050

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The Peterborough Examiner said, "In exchange for giving up her seat ... Scott is taking on the 'enormous'"—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Oxford is warned, the member from Simcoe–Grey is warned, and we'll continue.

Finish, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: "In exchange for giving up her seat ... Scott is taking on the 'enormous responsibility'"—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We're going to get this. The member from Prince Edward–Hastings is warned.

Carry on.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The Toronto Star said, "Progressive Conservative Laurie Scott will resign her central Ontario seat and take on the job of getting the opposition ready for the next election, Tory said in Lindsay."

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question. The member from Leeds–Grenville—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. The member from Leeds–Grenville.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Steve Clark: I know I can't ask my question to the Minister of Energy so I'm going to ask it to the Attorney General, but I encourage the Attorney General and government House leader to use standing order 37(e). It allows him to refer the question to another minister, and I encourage him to pass it to the Minister of Energy.

A federal crown prosecutor has accused the Minister of Energy of seeking an alleged bribe. Guilty or innocent, charged or not charged, an accusation of this magnitude shatters any moral or ethical authority this minister has to

govern. It also calls into question whether the public can trust this minister.

He cannot and he must not remain as a minister until the case concludes. Speaker, again, I'm going to ask the Attorney General, I implore him to use 37(e) and refer it to the Minister of Energy. Since a crown federal prosecutor has accused the Minister of Energy of seeking an alleged bribe, will the Minister of Energy resign until the case against Patricia Sorbara has been concluded?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I remind the member opposite again—and I think he knows this very well—that this matter is before the courts. It's not appropriate for this matter to be discussed here in the Legislature.

Speaker, I want to be very clear. Contrary to what the Leader of the Opposition said, no member of this House has been charged in this matter. Let's be absolutely clear on this. The Minister of Energy continues to do his job honourably as the Minister of Energy. He continues to serve the people of Sudbury honourably. There are no charges against him nor are there any charges against any member of this House.

There are two charges laid against individuals who do not serve in this House. That matter is before the courts. It's only appropriate that it be dealt with in the court.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: Again, back to the Attorney General: For once, I actually agree with this government. I do believe that guilt or innocence is a matter for the courts. The opposition would not ask that this case be tried here in the Legislative Assembly.

But this isn't about the outcome of the bribery charges. These questions aren't about the matter before the courts. They are about the trust in this minister of the crown. This is about the moral and ethical implications of a minister who's being named in a bribery charge by the Ontario Provincial Police.

Mr. Speaker, how can the public trust this Minister of Energy to do his job when his ethics have been questioned by a federal prosecutor? How can he do that? Why doesn't he do the honourable thing and resign?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Attorney General?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: The Deputy Premier, Speaker.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As we look in history, we're seeing some more examples where the Leader of the Opposition maybe wishes he could revisit some decisions. I'm looking to July 22, 2015, when the Leader of the Opposition thanked Garfield Dunlop for 35 years of public service at the municipal and provincial levels, and said the former PC education critic would now be the "chief education adviser" to the party.

I wonder whether Mr. Dunlop did actually provide some education to the Leader of the Opposition on throwing stones in glass houses.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please.

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm going to again try to go back to the Attorney General. There are numerous ministers who have stepped down when they've been named in an investigation: my predecessor Senator Runciman, the member for Simcoe–Grey, the former Liberal finance minister, Greg Sorbara. They all left office until the ethical questions that surrounded them had been cleared. Speaker, I can't for the life of me understand why this Minister of Energy has not already tendered his resignation. I can't understand it. It's beyond me.

Again, we're talking about doing the honourable thing. We're asking what Ontarians expect that he would have already done. The people who had elected him in that by-election in Sudbury all think the same way. They can't understand why you haven't already tendered your resignation and stepped aside.

Speaker, I'm going to give him another chance. Attorney General, refer the matter under 37(e) to the Minister of Energy: Will the Minister of Energy do the right thing? Will he resign?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think what we're hearing is some attack on that side to this way, but they are very uncomfortable with hearing allegations that maybe they behaved in a questionable way. Whether it's Queenie Yu, whether it's Garfield Dunlop, whether it's the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock or whether it's the Leader of the Opposition himself, we have clearly documented examples where I suggest—

Mr. Steve Clark: Bob Runciman, Jim Wilson, Mike Colle, Greg Sorbara: They all did the honourable thing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds–Grenville is warned.

Finish, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: It is beyond me to understand how they can be calling on us to do what they call the honourable thing when it is very, very clear that the transgressions from that party are far more serious.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the deputy leader. The Criminal Code of Canada states very clearly that it is an offence if "a member of Parliament or of the Legislature of a province, directly or indirectly, corruptly accepts, obtains, agrees to accept or attempts to obtain, for themselves or another person, any money, valuable consideration, office, place or employment in respect of anything done or omitted or to be done or omitted by them in their official capacity."

After standing before an Ontario judge, a federal prosecutor said, "Mr. Thibeault sought certain benefits, offers or job or employment as a part of his conditions to run as an MPP."

Without getting into any details of this allegation, does this raise any concerns for the government?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As has been said many, many times, that is an issue that is before the court and that is where it belongs.

But I do think—if you will recall, in 2013, the NDP party decided to install Adam Giambrone as their candidate in Scarborough–Guildwood: “Giambrone, who was parachuted into the riding, and the party hierarchy ... allegedly” stacked “the nomination meeting,” according to the Toronto Star.

“With the apparent backing of NDP leader Andrea Horwath and the party brass, Giambrone decided that he would like the nomination even though riding association insiders confessed he was ‘not known’ to them.”

“The president of the NDP’s Scarborough–Guildwood riding association said Thursday he is determined to get answers for why the party appears to have orchestrated Adam Giambrone’s nomination....”

A 92-year-old volunteer, Joy Taylor, said that she would quit—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary?

1100

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: The current member for Sudbury was a federal MP until he was given the provincial Liberal nomination. A federal prosecutor says very clearly, “Mr. Thibeault sought certain benefits, offers or job or employment as part of his conditions to run as MPP.”

My question is, what benefits, if any, was the Minister of Energy offered?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think we’d all be interested in knowing: When the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton was considering a run at the federal NDP leadership, which was widely known, widely reported, he ended up on the front bench. He ended up as deputy leader. I’m just curious whether that was just a coincidence, or was there some reason that he ended up on the front bench as deputy leader and has, so far at least, not appeared to be running for the federal leadership?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: The government denies that the Minister of Energy has anything to do with or is in any way connected to the bribery scandal, but the OPP believes that the campaign director for the Liberal Party offered a bribe to the Minister of Energy. Now the federal prosecutor says that the minister sought “certain benefits, offers or job or employment” as a condition of running.

My question is simple. When did the government learn that the current member for Sudbury had asked for any benefits?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: There is a matter before the courts. That’s where it belongs. But I can tell you that the Minister of Energy is a fabulous member of this Legislature. He is doing extremely hard work on a very challenging file. He is indeed bringing down the cost of energy for people across this province by 8% come January 1, and the most rural customers will see a 20% decline.

This is a member who exemplifies public service. We are delighted that he is serving the people of Ontario. We’re very proud of that. We think he’s a terrific person.

We need to let what happens in the court happen in the court.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Be seated, please.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I’m asking, when you be seated, to be seated when I ask you the first time.

New question.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question again is to the Deputy Premier. The government insists that nothing illegal happened, that the Minister of Energy is not charged, that there is no Election Act defence yet—charge laid—but the people of Ontario deserve better. They deserve a higher bar than that. Politicians should meet a higher bar than not doing something illegal.

Does the Deputy Premier believe it’s appropriate for the Minister of Energy to continue to sit in cabinet when a federal prosecutor believes that he was offered a benefit as a condition for him to run and to win that seat?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Of course we believe he should be here. He’s doing a terrific job.

But I do want to go back to the 2013 Scarborough–Guildwood by-election. The nomination was such a shemuzzle, the NDP nomination, that 92-year-old volunteer Joy Taylor said she was not only quitting the riding executive, but she quit the party, she was so disgusted. She went on to say, “They know they were deceitful but they are doing everything within their power (to deny it).”

Well, I think that’s just not acceptable in any party, Speaker. I think the holier-than-thou approach that the NDP is taking—they need to explain what happened in Scarborough–Guildwood, what happened when the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton decided to give up his federal ambitions for the deputy leadership of the Ontario NDP.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: When former finance minister Greg Sorbara’s name simply appeared in an RCMP warrant—simply a name in a warrant—he decided to do the honourable thing and step aside until his name was cleared, until that was dealt with.

The Minister of Energy is at the centre of this scandal. He’s at the centre. He’s the subject matter of an alleged bribe. It’s absolutely appropriate for him to do the honourable thing. In fact, we have a federal prosecutor who states that he accepted or potentially accepted a benefit for him to run.

Will the government do the right thing in this circumstance, take a page from their own former member, Mr. Sorbara, and actually do the honourable thing and resign until the matter is dealt with?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The Minister of Energy, as I said earlier, is doing an outstanding job. He’s doing an outstanding job as minister; he’s doing an outstanding

job as the member for Sudbury. He is a very strong representative of that area. We are proud to call him a Liberal. We are proud to have him in our caucus. He's doing important work on the energy file, a very, very complex file. He has mastered the file and he is moving forward to reduce the cost to Ontarians.

We have done an important job cleaning up the mess that we inherited in the electricity system, and we're now turning our attention to making sure that electricity is affordable.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Final supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: The Premier was elected on a promise of a fresh start. After the bad ethics of the Dalton McGuinty years, the Premier promised that things would be different, that Ontarians could expect to find a government that was open and transparent, with integrity and ethics. Instead, the people see a government that is only interested in its own self-interest, in protecting its own cabinet ministers and its own insiders.

Over the weekend, the Premier made it clear: The reason that she was so unpopular was that she wasn't who the people thought they voted for. That's true. Here's an opportunity to do the right thing. Here's an opportunity for the government to restore a little bit of faith, to take a step toward restoring faith and doing the right thing and showing some leadership.

In this circumstance, the right thing is for the Minister of Energy to resign from his cabinet position until the allegation is dealt with. Will this government show some leadership, restore faith in government and do the right thing?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.
Minister.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think that the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton should actually show some leadership himself and tell us what happened. How is it that he put his federal leadership aspirations on hold, and how is it that he became deputy leader of the NDP? I think if he's calling for transparency, he should look in the mirror and share with us the story of how that happened.

FIRST RESPONDERS

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Deputy Premier. I've spoken in the House before about a Simcoe county firefighter, Bill Wilkins. He served the province and the city of Barrie. Bill tragically lost his life responding to a call. I vividly remember attending the funeral of Bill Wilkins in 2002, how it shook our community and, frankly, left his family without help.

Mr. Speaker, my first day in the House as an MPP I asked this question about the need to have a heroes' fund. I believe we as a province can do more. I believe we can help those families like the Wilkins family.

Will the Liberal government support a heroes' fund to provide survivor benefits for families of first responders

who have fallen in the service of our province? When I asked this a year ago, the government said that they would consider it, that it would be looked at in the options of things we can do to support our first responders. A year and a half later, I'm asking again: Will they support this? It's the right thing to do for our first responders.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. David Orazietti: I want to thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. I want to recognize the hard work of our first responders and our firefighters who are here at Queen's Park today for all of the service that they provide for Ontarians. They are certainly true heroes in our communities.

This issue is very important to us. We do provide some resources in this regard to support individuals and to recognize the work that they do. This week, in fact, here at Queen's Park on Thursday, we'll have the bravery awards, recognizing those first responders for outstanding service.

This is an important issue, and I recognize the Leader of the Opposition has requested that we move in this direction. It's something that we're considering. I think it's an important initiative. I think we can continue to do more to recognize those brave men and women who defend and support our communities each and every day. I look forward to working with the member opposite to help move this type of initiative—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary? The member from Perth-Wellington.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Again to the Deputy Premier: On March 17, 2010, my community was devastated by the loss of two firefighters in a tragic building collapse. Firefighters Ken Rea and Ray Walter lost their lives and made the ultimate sacrifice when a building they ran into collapsed on them. The least Ontario can do is support the families of men and women who lose their lives while saving others.

1110

When will this government commit to a heroes' fund, expanding survivor benefits for the families of fallen first responders?

Hon. David Orazietti: Again, to the member opposite, this is an important issue. We recognize the very vital work of our first responders. I know that we've increased funding for a wellness unit through, for example, the OPP. There's about \$4.4 million dollars in that particular program. We also offer programs such as the Constable Joe Macdonald Public Safety Officers' Survivors Scholarship Fund, which provides scholarships for spouses and children of public safety officers killed in the line of duty. Ontario is a leader in this country in providing supports and services for our police, firefighters and other first responders.

I'm committed to working with the individual opposite to develop, enhance and continue to build on the programs that we offer to support our first responders and their families.

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Acting Premier. This morning, the Premier's privatization expert recommended that the government find "alternative financing structures" to fund our digital health system. The health minister keeps saying that his priority is to "leverage" health assets and maximize their value, but we've heard all of this before. The Premier promised not to sell Hydro One, and she did; she turned around and started selling off our public hydro to private investors. It's no wonder Ontarians cannot trust this government.

Will the Acting Premier tell Ontarians what alternative financing structures the government has in mind for our private health records, and will she do it before the Premier makes another huge mistake that, once again, hurts the people of this province?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I was pleased to join Mr. Clark for his press conference to deliver recommendations based on the work that I asked him to do, based on terms of reference that made it explicit that there would be no sale of eHealth or digital health assets in this province, that there would be no sale of individuals' personal health information. Those were his terms of reference. He has reiterated that in his report as well. He makes no recommendation pointing toward privatization or sale of any elements of eHealth, and that was the statement that I made at the press conference as well.

If the NDP insist on creating this mythological approach of theirs, that's their business to do. I've made it categorically clear here in the Legislature, as the Premier has, countless times. I'm probably up to 20 times where I've insisted that that's not on the table, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary? The member from Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Again to the Acting Premier: The people of Ontario are clear. Care should drive health care decisions, not profit. People, not private profits, should always come first in our health care system, but this government is putting private profit first. A year ago, the Premier's privatization czar said Ontario hospitals should be linked more closely to the private sector, and now the same adviser is calling for alternative financing structures to fund digital health care.

Don't get me wrong, Speaker. We all know that digital health care will bring us benefits. Ontarians own Health Infoway right now, but it looks like the private sector will own the ramp to those infoways. People don't want the privatization of Hydro One to be repeated in our health care system. People want to keep the digital health assets in public hands where our health care system belongs.

When will this government stand up for patients and reject any attempt to increase profits in our health care system?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I couldn't have been clearer or more categorical in this morning's press conference when

I indicated that there would be no sale of digital health assets, that there would be no sale of private health information. But maybe the third party has got caught up with what has been happening south of the border with the Trump election. They've created their own post-truth approach here in Ontario where they're making it up as they go along. There is no intention. They can continue to promulgate this myth, but the reality is—and I've stated it so many times, and this is consistent with the recommendation and the assertion of Mr. Clark this morning and in his report—there will be no sale.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: My question is for the Minister of Education. Ensuring students receive the best possible education across Ontario is incredibly important. Ensuring that the dollars that we invest in our education system help support students in the best possible way is a fundamental principle driving everything that we do in this government.

Minister, we all know how committed our government is to helping our children become lifelong learners. Ontario has a lot to be proud of in terms of student achievement, thanks in large part to our great educators and staff.

Everyone knows that the party opposite ran on a plan to make cuts in education, to fire teachers and education workers. This would have had a devastating impact on our world-recognized education system.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Can you tell us more about the benefits of our government increasing investments in education all throughout Ontario?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I want to thank the member from Kingston and the Islands for that question. I know what a strong advocate she is for her community and for young people in her community.

Each year, Ontario welcomes about 100 delegations from the world's leading jurisdictions, who are visiting to study Ontario as a model for delivering better outcomes for our children and students. They look at our places of learning, as well as what we do for our youngest learners in child care and all the way up. We help adults gain their formal education as well.

Our educators, our teachers, students and their parents deserve credit. Through their hard work, Ontario's high school graduation rate increased to 85.5%, the highest level in our province's history. When the world notices what our children in our schools already know—that Ontario schools are the best places to learn—if we had listened to the PC plan for education—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Thank you, Minister. I know that Ontario's high school graduation rate has increased to the highest level in the province's history, with more students than ever graduating with the skills and knowledge that they need to reach their very full potential.

We are extremely proud to see the results and influence of the investments of this government in our

education system. It is important that we continue to support school boards in supporting the success of every single student in Ontario. Today, more students get more funding, and that's why we're seeing great returns on our investment in our children's achievement rate.

The PC Party has a questionable track record when it comes to education. When they were in government, they closed schools and increased class sizes and, in the last election, they ran on firing 100,000 workers, including educators. Given the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings is warned. The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound is warned.

I checked my record. The member from Prince Edward–Hastings has already been warned. He is therefore named.

Mr. Smith was escorted from the chamber.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Anyone else?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. That wasn't appropriate either. If I knew who it was, they would be warned.

Finish, please.

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Given this history, can the minister please inform the House about our government's long track record of increasing investments—

Interjection.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Of incompetence.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry is warned, and the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington is warned.

Carry on, Minister.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: Education is a right, and a high-quality, well-rounded education is the rightful experience of Ontario's children that they benefit from every single day. That's why we've worked so hard to make Ontario's education system one of the best in the world.

1120

But the member's question was specifically about rural school boards, so let's look at Prince Edward–Hastings. Funding for the Prince Edward–Hastings school board was increased by approximately \$310 million, an increase of 84% since 2003. Per pupil funding has increased by \$5,100 since 2003, an increase of 61%. We've also built three new schools in this riding of Prince Edward–Hastings—Harmony Public School, Stirling Public School, Tweed public school—even though the member from that area ran on firing teachers in his own community.

On this side of the House, we will continue to build Ontario's education system up, especially in rural Ontario.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. John Yakabuski: I have a question for the Attorney General. There was no indication that he wouldn't be here.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Yes, I'm looking into that now—the Attorney General. Just wait.

Thank you. The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: To the Attorney General: Yesterday, crown prosecutor Vern Brewer stated, "Our allegation" is "that Mr. Thibeault sought certain benefits, offers or job or employment as part of his conditions to run as MPP."

The prosecutor then stated that the reason that the Minister of Energy wasn't charged was because "the section makes it an offence to offer, not necessarily to receive" an alleged bribe.

My question to the Attorney General is simple: Are we really at a point where not appearing before a judge to face charges by a minister themselves is the bare standard that the minister must meet in order to remain in this Liberal cabinet?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: This matter is before the courts, as has been said many, many times. But I do think it might be interesting to review some cases that have come here. I think we do need some answers.

I want to talk about these kind of mysterious and secret negotiations held between the Leader of the Opposition's chief of staff and candidate Queenie Lu in the recent Scarborough–Rouge River by-election. You see, what happened was, Queenie Lu had questions—

Interjections: Queenie Yu.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Queenie Yu, sorry—had questions around the leader's position on the sex ed curriculum. I understand why she had questions; I think we all have questions because he's had so many positions on it. But the PC's top aide sent an email the very same day that was the deadline to withdraw from the race—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Back to the AG: It used to be that they punted questions to the AG; now they're punting them away from him.

If the Premier was going to kill ministerial accountability, perhaps she could have at least shown up here for the funeral. Under this Liberal government, you can be investigated by the OPP and remain in the Premier's office; you can be investigated by the OPP and still remain in cabinet; you can have a crown prosecutor say that the only reason the Minister of Energy wasn't charged is because requesting an alleged bribe isn't an offence, only offering one is.

Is there no ethical barrier this Liberal government won't cross, or is this just what it looks like when you care more about the fortunes of the Liberal Party and staying in power than you care about the people and the interests of the people of Ontario?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Thank you.

Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock is someone who is respected by every person in this Legislature. She's somebody that we can work with. She has our respect. But something very, very interesting happened back in 2009, when the new leader needed a riding to run in. After some period of time, as I recall, the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock resigned her seat so that the new leader could run and accepted a paid position with the party the very same day.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I have been listening very carefully that questions put are within the scope of the expectation that I have for section 23(h). You're getting close. Be very careful. Carry on.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I just have questions about this remarkable coincidence. If the Leader of the Opposition is claiming that that was just a coincidence, then I guess I have to accept him at his face value, but it is passing strange that the very same day the seat was resigned—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

LABOUR DISPUTE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Before I begin the question, I also want to welcome members of CUPE Local 4914, who are here today.

My colleague from Hamilton Mountain raised this issue yesterday a number of times: The workers at the Peel regional children's aid society, members of CUPE Local 4914, have been on the picket line now for three months, and it's not about wages. They are striking for issues of safety, fairness and, above all, quality of care.

These workers do what they do because they care deeply about the children and families they work for. That's why the workers are asking for a hard cap on the total number of active cases that they work on at one time. That's what they feel is adequate or necessary to adequately protect children at risk.

Workload caps exist in other jurisdictions and other children's aid societies, but they don't exist in this particular one. Does the minister think workers and children in Peel deserve the same quality of care as other jurisdictions?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As a former Minister of Children and Youth Services, I got to know kids in the care of the CAS. I learned through that experience that, of all the people and responsibilities, there is no greater responsibility than to the kids who have been taken under the care of the province. For whatever reason, they could not be cared for by their own parents. Our responsibility to those kids trumps everything else we do.

Having said that, labour negotiations are a matter between the employer and the union. It is inappropriate for me to comment on that negotiation. We are hopeful that the employer and the union will do all they can to achieve a successful resolution to this problem.

But as I said, these kids are our kids. We are responsible for kids in the care of the CAS. We have to do everything we can to make sure they get the care they need.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Kids and families in Peel want to see the strike end as soon as possible. They want to see this resolved. I understand that there are only four outstanding issues that can be sent to binding arbitration. Negotiations have stalled. Currently, the Peel CAS management won't agree to go to arbitration.

The children and families in Peel who rely on the CAS can't wait another month for this matter to be resolved. So, Mr. Speaker, my question is to the government: Will the government intervene and get the parties to arbitration?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you to the member for this very, very important question. What we're seeing in the Peel CAS is completely out of character for the usual experience of labour relations in the province of Ontario. Between 98% and 99% of agreements are reached without a resort to a lockout or strike. That obviously isn't happening at the Peel CAS.

What we do at the Ministry of Labour is we try to bring the parties back to the table. In Ontario, we have some of the best mediators and some of the best arbitrators in the country. We've brought them to bear in this regard. What we're trying to do with this highly skilled mediation team is working with CUPE and working with the employer. There's nothing this government wants more and there's nothing the Ministry of Labour wants more than to see an agreement reached at the table. I will tell you: On a daily basis, I keep track of this. It's something we take very, very seriously.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: To the Minister of Education: Parents from across Ontario came to Queen's Park yesterday to highlight the importance of rural schools in our province. I was impressed by the passion that they had for their children's education, and I was happy to hear that the Minister of Education took the time to meet with them. Parents in my own community never pass up the opportunity to speak to me about Ontario's publicly funded education system, as they see it as an essential vehicle for their child's ability to grow, develop and succeed, and I agree.

1130

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Can you speak to some of the work under way in our government to boost student achievement rates and help children achieve excellence?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I want to thank the member from Barrie for her commitment to student excellence and for being such a fierce advocate on behalf of her community. I know that even before becoming Ontario's Minister of Education, parents I'd meet in my community

were so committed to their child's growth and development, they'd speak to me about what I call the continuum of learning.

Our government has taken major steps to improve student outcomes. I'd like to highlight that despite declining enrolment in the province, our government has increased funding to our school boards by 59% since 2003. With more students graduating today than at any other time in Ontario's history, this is proof that our government's plan to help students achieve excellence is working.

Mr. Speaker, the PC Party wanted to fight, fire and freeze out our teachers—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I'm going to remind the minister: I stand; you sit.

Supplementary.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Thank you to the minister for your update. Certainly, it is clear that Ontario's record investments in education are making a difference in student achievement.

I know a lot of young parents who are putting their children into our publicly funded systems, and they're interested in the quality of the buildings in which their children are learning. We all know that you have made major investments across the province to build new schools and repair older ones.

We also know that the PC Party has a terrible track record when it comes to education. When they were in government, they closed schools and increased class sizes, and in the last election, the current Leader of the Opposition, MPP Brown, my MP at the time—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I'm listening carefully for a government question, and it should be there. Get to that point.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: He patted Tim Hudak on the back as he announced that they would fire 100,000—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Start the clock. If the member does not follow my instructions, I'll pass. Carry on.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Can the minister inform this House about our government's long track record of increasing investments in rural school boards, including the building of new schools?

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I want to thank the wonderful member from Barrie again for the question. Mr. Speaker, we've worked so hard to make Ontario's education system one of the best in the world.

The question asked was specifically about rural school boards. Let's look at Lambton-Kent-Middlesex. Funding for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex schools was increased by approximately \$552.9 million, an increase of 65% since 2003. Per-pupil funding has also increased by \$4,500 since 2003, an increase of 62%.

Our government has also built six new schools in this rural community: Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic School, St. Nicholas Catholic School, St. André Bessette Catholic School, Wilberforce Public School, Mary Wright Public School and West Nissouri Public School. Even though the member from that area enthusiastically ran on a plan

to fire teachers in his own community, we will continue to build Ontario's education system—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. I'm going to indicate to the government that I'm a little bit disappointed, and I am concerned, that you are ascribing motive to any member other than your own riding. It needs to stop. The decorum does not get helped.

New question.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Good morning, Speaker. My question is for the Attorney General. Yesterday, we learned from a crown lawyer that the energy minister sought an alleged bribe to run in a by-election. In the court of public opinion, it's clear this government and minister only do what's best for the Liberal Party.

The people of Ontario deserve better. They deserve a government that puts the interests of the people first. They deserve an energy minister who is clearly focused on the hydro crisis that's impacting families and businesses across the province. Mr. Speaker, will the energy minister do the right thing and resign?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, the Minister of Energy is absolutely doing the right thing. He is working as hard as he possibly can to make sure that we have clean, reliable energy in this province.

As I was saying earlier, I still haven't had any explanation for these secret negotiations between a candidate in Scarborough-Rouge River and the office of the Leader of the Opposition. You see, this secret negotiation appears to be about whether or not a candidate might withdraw from the election because she was getting support from people the Conservatives wanted to get. This all has to do with the flip-flop, flip-flop, flip-flop-flip on sex education. There are lots of questions around negotiations, these secret negotiations between the candidate and the leader—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I want to go back to the Attorney General. In the north, Speaker, we work hard and play by the rules. That's the example we expect in our elected officials; however, it's clear the energy minister forgot his northern roots.

From backroom deals to a record five OPP investigations, this Liberal government has repeatedly shown that it's ethically challenged. Now the Minister of Energy is distracted by legal problems as opposed to working to address the hydro crisis his government created. He's failing Ontario families and businesses, and he's failing the people of Sudbury and the people of the north. Mr. Speaker, will the energy minister do the right thing on behalf of his constituents and resign?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please. Thank you.

Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: My constituents are looking forward to January 1, when they're going to see an 8% reduction in their hydro bill thanks to the Minister of Energy. In the north, in the most remote parts of this province, they'll see a 20% decrease, Speaker. That's the kind of hard work the people in the north are grateful for, and that's being led by our Minister of Energy.

I do want to go back to this kind of puzzling coincidence. As you know, a new leader was elected by the PC Party, Speaker. He needed a seat. He looked around and he found one. He found one that was already held by the Conservative Party, that was held by Garfield Dunlop. In a strange, strange coincidence, the very day that Garfield Dunlop resigned his seat to make way for the now Leader of the Opposition, he got a job. He got a job with the party—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. New question.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Percy Hatfield: My question is to the Acting Premier. Good morning. For years we in the NDP have been calling on the Liberal government to develop an automotive strategy for Ontario. We've lost far too many manufacturing jobs in this province. Unifor has settled a new contract with the American-based auto industry. Ottawa isn't doing anything to protect auto jobs. President-elect Trump is threatening to tear up existing trade contracts. Speaker, what is the Wynne government doing to protect and grow Ontario's automotive industry? We need an automotive strategy, and we need it now.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Economic Development and Growth.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, we do have an automotive strategy in the province of Ontario and it's working pretty darn well. We've seen in the last three weeks alone \$1.5 billion to \$1.7 billion of commitment in investments in places all over the province, including Windsor, Oshawa, St. Catharines and Woodstock, among others. I'm trying to think of some of the others.

Interjection: Brampton.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Brampton. Mr. Speaker, we're seeing a real renaissance of investment in the province of Ontario. It's coming because we do have a very effective automotive strategy, not only in supporting the jobs in today's automotive sector, the assembly jobs, but also in promoting our ability to innovate in that sector and be leaders in that sector. We have a long and healthy past in the auto sector and we have a long and prosperous future, primarily because we do have a very effective automotive strategy.

1140

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary? The member from Essex.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: The Premier's appointed so-called auto czar has been absolutely silent. There is no automotive strategy in the province of Ontario. Let's be frank. It has been left up to the workers in those plants to

fend for themselves against market conditions, to make themselves productive despite no action on the part of this government.

Crossing your fingers and hoping for the best is not an automotive strategy. We need a plan and we deserve a plan that addresses the skyrocketing prices of hydro and makes us the most productive place to manufacture automotive parts, aerospace parts. We can do that, but we need leadership from the provincial government. When is this government going to get to the table and devise an automotive policy that protects workers in the province of Ontario?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: When it comes to auto and manufacturing, this province has put forward \$1.7 billion of investment. That has leveraged \$16 billion from private sector manufacturers in this province, and 70,000 manufacturing jobs have been created by that policy. So how can you stand there and say that we have no policy?

The fact of the matter is, the plants in Windsor, those engine plants, were considered to be dead and gone. Because this government has an effective policy, because we work closely with Unifor, because we work in partnership with—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Carry on.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'll comment on a heckle I just heard: Sure. Would you like to go?

Minister.

Hon. Brad Duguid: The NDP should be complimenting this government on the great work we've done in partnership with Unifor, in partnership with our auto partners, to save and ensure that we have a great future for tens of thousands of auto workers.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I'm happy to rise today on National Housing Day. My question is for the Minister of Housing and poverty reduction.

As I said, it gives me great pleasure to address the Legislature and mark National Housing Day. National Housing Day is an opportunity for us to recognize the importance of people having a place to call home. Clean, safe and affordable housing can improve a person's health and the prospects for a good education and employment.

This need for affordable housing is something that I often hear from my constituents in my riding of Davenport, but at the same time, it is time to reflect on the work to be done. Would the minister please inform the House today, on National Housing Day, on how the government is helping to promote affordable housing across the province of Ontario?

Hon. Chris Ballard: Thank you to the member from Davenport for that good question.

We've made some real progress in working to improve the lives of vulnerable people across this great province. Since 2003, for example, Ontario has committed more than \$5 billion—\$5 billion—to affordable housing. We're also supporting the creation of over 20,000 affordable rental housing units and making more than 275,000 repairs and improvements to social and affordable housing units.

Our government is also helping to reduce homelessness through the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative. As we work toward our goal to end chronic homelessness by 2025, I'm proud that we're increasing investments in CHPI across the province by \$45 million over the next three years.

Our investments are working to strengthen Ontario by promoting a housing market that serves the full range of housing needs, protects tenants and encourages the private sector.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Thank you, Minister. I want to congratulate you for all the great work that you're doing on this particular file. I know that my constituents in Davenport will be very pleased to know and to hear about all of the investments that you refer to and all the commitments that our province is making in terms of addressing the affordable housing issue we have here in the province.

Today, the federal government is releasing a summary of community and stakeholder consultations on housing issues as part of the national housing strategy. It has been over three decades since the last major national housing strategy discussion took place. I'm glad to see the new federal government is working with both the provinces and territories to change this.

I know Ontario welcomes our new federal partner and the opportunity to engage in this strategy, as we have long called for. Can the minister share with this House how this vision will be made a reality with the proper funding—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Chris Ballard: Again, I'd like to thank the member for that question.

I believe that all levels of government have a shared responsibility for housing across this country. We agree that all Canadians deserve housing that is suitable and affordable. It's why, when I went to the first national housing strategy round table in Victoria in June, I was delighted to see a federal government minister responsible for housing there. It was the first time in eight years—eight years—that there had been a federal minister there.

And while Ontario welcomes the strengthened partnership with the federal government and the recent investments from the last federal budget, what our communities really need is a long-term funding partner at the table. Ontario needs a national housing strategy that includes a stable supply of flexible funding. That can only be achieved when we have a vision through a successful national housing strategy.

REPORT, ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSIONER OF ONTARIO

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that I have today laid upon the table the 2016 annual greenhouse gas progress report from the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1147 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

GAY LEA FOODS CO-OPERATIVE

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm extremely pleased to share with the House today that a long-standing dairy co-operative in my riding is continuing to make immense, valuable contributions to Ontario's dairy industry and supporting rural communities.

Since Gay Lea was established by a small group of farmers in 1958, its membership has grown to include more than 1,300 dairy farmers, who work tirelessly throughout southwestern Ontario to produce 35% of Ontario's cow milk.

Last week, Gay Lea Foods announced that they will be investing \$140 million over four years in innovative projects that will transform the face of the Canadian dairy industry. In response to the Dairy Farmers of Ontario ingredient strategy, Gay Lea's investment is unprecedented in Canada, and it will pave the way for a nutraceutical-grade dairy ingredients hub in Ontario.

This investment means a \$60-million expansion in Teeswater, a Bruce county village that will see more jobs and more prosperity because of this new venture. It also means they'll be transforming the industry in a new and creative way that will allow Gay Lea to serve the needs of people across Ontario. They'll also become a global leader.

I had the honour of attending the announcement last week. It was awesome to see the excitement for what lies ahead, not only for Gay Lea, but for the milk industry overall in Ontario.

I look very much forward to watching Gay Lea continue to grow and meet the changing needs of Ontarians. On behalf of Huron-Bruce, Ontario, and a person who is proud to call Teeswater home, I want to extend my sincere congratulations to Gay Lea. We'll be with you every step of the way. Thank you.

LABOUR DISPUTE

Mr. Paul Miller: Mr. Speaker, the 435 workers at the Children's Aid Society of the Region of Peel, members of CUPE Local 4914—a lot of them are with us today—have been on the picket line for nine weeks. But this strike isn't about wages; it's about workload. These workers care deeply about the children and the families

they work with, and that's why they have been asking for a limit on the total number of cases they are expected to carry at one time. This is exactly the kind of workload cap that is already in place and working well in other comparably sized and funded children's aid societies; for example, like Durham region. Why can't it happen in Peel, Speaker?

Even with this employer's stubborn refusal of a real workload cap, the strike could be over tomorrow. CUPE has proposed a reasonable compromise: Send the outstanding issues to binding arbitration, and let everyone go back to work to help our kids.

The only reason that it hasn't happened is because the employer is refusing. What's wrong with them, Speaker? Why are they holding this process up? Don't they want children's aid services to get back to normal?

Let's hope the Minister of Children and Youth Services is listening to this right now. Let's hope that he picks up the phone today and asks the management team at Peel's Children's Aid to come to their senses and put these people back to work.

HOLODOMOR

Mr. Yvan Baker: Speaker, this week is Holodomor Awareness Week, and I stand today to pay tribute to the victims of the Holodomor.

This week we pay tribute to the anniversary of the famine genocide of 1932-33, known as the Holodomor. This was when Joseph Stalin closed Ukraine's borders and confiscated all the grain to destroy a Ukrainian population that was opposed to his rule—a population that sought the same freedom and the same independence that the people of Ukraine are fighting for today.

At the height of the Holodomor, 17 people per minute, 1,000 per hour, and 25,000 per day, were dying of famine. The world was silent, and millions died as a result.

My grandmother was a survivor of the Holodomor, and she lost three of her brothers to the Soviet regime. She once told me that she hoped that the victims of the Holodomor would not only be remembered, but honoured. "Honoured," she said, meant not just remembering them or commemorating them, but learning from the mistakes that were made by the West and making sure that something like this never happens again.

One of the best ways to do this is to ensure that young people here in Ontario learn about the Holodomor. That is why I am so proud to stand here today on behalf of members of the Ukrainian community who worked toward that goal for so long, with so many MPPs on all sides who supported this cause, and with the Premier, who ensured that the Holodomor is in the Ontario curriculum so that every young person in Ontario can learn about the Holodomor. More recently, our government provided \$750,000 in funding to the Holodomor Mobile Classroom, a bus that has been retrofitted and that will travel the province and educate our young people across

Ontario about the Holodomor and the lessons of the Holodomor.

This week, it is important that we commemorate and remember, but also that we honour the victims of the Holodomor. Let us do as my grandmother would have asked: Let us remember the victims, let us commemorate the victims and let us honour them.

WASAGA BEACH FIRE DEPARTMENT

Mr. Jim Wilson: I rise today to share with the House a very special story that involves the members of the Wasaga Beach fire department as well as a local family.

Early last Friday morning, a couple from the east end of town pulled into the town's west end fire hall, knowing they wouldn't make it to the Collingwood General and Marine Hospital delivery room. Firefighters are trained for this type of situation, and they quickly sprang into action. The two firefighters on duty, Jamie Murphy and Jason Martin, did a tremendous job. Chief Mike McWilliam told Bayshore Broadcasting that when he arrived at the hall, the baby was already born, was healthy and was crying, and the mother was smiling.

This is a wonderful story that showcases the terrific skills our firefighters have. It reminds us of the very important job that these brave men and women do in our community. We owe them our great gratitude.

Often firefighters are there to help us and to support us during times of great loss. While we are grateful for their assistance on those dark days, it was nice to see them play such a vital role at such a joyous time in this family's life.

I offer my congratulations to the firefighters and to the parents and their newborn baby girl.

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I rise today to speak to an issue I have brought up in this House many times that this Liberal government refuses to address; that is, the lack of supports for people suffering with mental health challenges. This is a growing concern in my riding of London-Fanshawe, in our neighbouring communities like Woodstock and for thousands of people across our province.

Now that lack of supports is creeping into Ontario's Workplace Safety and Insurance Board. Simply put, the system intended to protect the workers is broken. A complaint sent to the Ombudsman charges that workers suffering with mental health challenges are being systematically denied benefits because of discriminatory and unconstitutional practices at the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board. When someone faces a workplace-related illness or injury, his or her first and only thought should be receiving care, not concern regarding an uphill battle with the WSIB.

It's time this government gets serious about fixing issues with the WSIB and helps them find their way back to helping injured workers, not hurting them.

HATZOLOH TORONTO

Mr. Mike Colle: Yesterday evening, I had the opportunity to attend an evening of appreciation for Hatzoloh Toronto. Hatzoloh is a non-profit organization whose volunteer first responders provide emergency medical services to the Toronto and York region Jewish community, in partnership with EMS in Toronto and York region. Hatzoloh is staffed entirely by volunteers.

Hatzoloh Toronto is now celebrating 18 years of service. I had the particular honour last night of attending with my friend and constituent, Chaim Weinman, who has been volunteering with Hatzoloh since its inception in Toronto 18 years ago. I would like to congratulate all the community members who donate to and volunteer for Hatzoloh.

Hatzoloh was founded in 1965 in New York when it became clear that many members of the Jewish Orthodox community had culturally specific medical needs that needed addressing. It then spread throughout the States and to Toronto and York region, where it continues to provide professional first responder service to anyone who asks for it.

I would like to commend Hatzoloh Toronto, especially Chaim Weinman, and all the wonderful people who volunteer their time, their money and their passion to provide first responder services to anyone who needs special care at that very important, critical time.

DEMENTIA

Mr. Jim McDonell: Hundreds of thousands of Ontarians live with dementia and many more are affected, such as caregivers, care partners and those who interact with dementia patients in the community, such as business owners. Our communities need to be dementia-ready and dementia-friendly.

1510

On Friday, our office and local community leaders took a step to achieving this goal by holding a community consultation on the development of Ontario's Dementia Strategy. The government launched a consultation paper, an online survey and several in-person meetings on the strategy, but none were scheduled either in Cornwall or anywhere east of Kingston.

Our community deserves a voice, and it came through loud and clear. Participants included people with dementia; their families, who are often the primary or sole caregiver; community agencies dedicated to serving people with dementia; and other concerned residents. They brought a wealth of experience to the table, and two of the strongest messages were that caregivers need significantly more respite programs, while programs and services for people living with dementia must accommodate the patient, not the other way around.

I will deliver a fuller summary of the recommendations arising from the consultation to the Minister of Health later this week.

BULLYING AWARENESS AND PREVENTION WEEK

Ms. Peggy Sattler: This week is Bullying Awareness and Prevention Week in Ontario schools, an opportunity to raise awareness of bullying and its impact on student learning and well-being. One of the most effective ways to do this is through The Pledge to End Bullying, an award-winning campaign to engage schools, families, organizations and businesses in making a verbal commitment to ending bullying behaviour. This community-wide initiative was launched in 2011 by CTV London and the Thames Valley District School Board, under the leadership of former director of education Bill Tucker.

The pledge recognizes that bullying is not just a school problem but a societal issue, and the entire community needs to take action to end it.

On November 10, I was proud to join with student and community leaders in London to repeat, once again, the simple yet powerful words of the pledge: "I believe that everybody has the right to live in a community where they feel safe, included, valued and accepted regardless of differences. I pledge to be respectful of others and stand up against bullying whenever and wherever I see it."

In the six years since the pledge was first launched, the campaign has spread to Kitchener, Barrie, Windsor, Kingston and Brockville, as well as Saskatoon and Winnipeg. Online, this year's campaign has collected close to 267,000 signatures.

If you haven't already done so, I encourage you to go to thepledgetoendbullying.ca because all Ontarians should feel welcome and safe wherever they might be.

COMMUNITY CENTRE 55

Mr. Arthur Potts: Community Centre 55 is a cornerstone of the Beach community in my riding of Beaches—East York. Its fantastic staff and volunteers provide programs and services year-round, enriching local lives.

This coming Sunday, Community Centre 55 is holding its annual Christmas parade. This year, our honorary chair is Penny Oleksiak, who is our four-time Olympic medallist in swimming from the recent Rio Olympic Games. I will be parading with other leaders from our community.

The parade will raise money to send Christmas dinners and gifts to nearly 1,000 families and individuals who are in need in the riding, including their pets. Funds are raised through entry fees. The financial and food donations from the public are well-accepted.

The parade supports what they call their Share a Christmas hamper program. With the assistance of hundreds of volunteers, this initiative sorts, packs and delivers Christmas hampers across the riding. Every year, we see schools and sports teams and families that come out to lend a hand. Volunteering in the program has become a tradition of many in the community, and the vital charitable program is completed in just five days,

between December 18 and December 22, bringing Christmas cheer and community spirit to those in our community who are most in need. Each hamper contains a Christmas dinner, extra non-perishables, clothes, household items and pet-related items.

Unfortunately, the number of applicants for assistance increases every year, but it is a testament to the strength of the community that it continues to meet the increased need for support every holiday season.

I want to especially thank Debbie Visconti, Nancy Culver and the chair of Community Centre 55, Leanne Rapley, for their incredible work in our community of Beaches–East York.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received a report on intended appointments dated November 22, 2016, of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 108(f)(9), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

LUNG HEALTH ACT, 2016

LOI DE 2016 SUR LA SANTÉ PULMONAIRE

Mr. McMeekin moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 71, An Act to establish the Lung Health Advisory Council and develop a provincial action plan respecting lung disease / Projet de loi 71, Loi créant le Conseil consultatif de la maladie pulmonaire et visant l'élaboration d'un plan d'action provincial à l'égard des maladies pulmonaires.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: This is being co-sponsored by two of my colleagues, the colleague from Nickel Belt and the colleague from Elgin–Middlesex–London. There are four esteemed members of the Lung Association here today to cheer us all on.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Ted McMeekin: Mr. Speaker, the statement will be very short. The Act to establish the Lung Health Advisory Council and develop a provincial action plan respecting lung disease only makes sense given its major

requirement is to make recommendations directly to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

NATIONAL HOLODOMOR AWARENESS WEEK

SEMAINE NATIONALE DE SENSIBILISATION À L'HOLODOMOR

Hon. Laura Albanese: This week, from November 21 to November 27, the Ukrainian Canadian Congress is holding National Holodomor Awareness Week in Canada. “Holodomor” is the term commonly used to refer to the mass starvation of millions of Ukrainians by the Soviet government in the early 1930s.

Tous les Ontariens et Ontariennes partagent avec les Canadiens ukrainiens la peine que doivent toujours ressentir les familles, les amis et les descendants des victimes de ce meurtre commandé par l'État.

The Holodomor was an attempt by the Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin to starve the Ukrainian people into submission. It did not succeed, but the Holodomor left a tragic mark on generations of Ukrainians. Today, we remember the millions who died in this monstrous act.

The word “Holodomor” itself translates to “hunger extermination.” Soviet brigades seized food stored in Ukraine to help people survive the long and cold winter. They then deliberately blocked Ukrainians from leaving the famine-struck areas to find food and survival elsewhere.

By June 1933, at the height of the Holodomor, people in Ukraine were dying at the rate of 30,000 per day. Nearly a third of the dead were children under the age of 10. Overall, an estimated five million to 10 million men, women and children perished without record in one of the century's most evil acts. Entire families were wiped out, villages depopulated; Ukraine came under the heel of the Soviet Union.

L'Ukraine a énormément souffert durant les années qui ont suivi l'Holodomor. Elle a été occupée par les nazis durant la Second Guerre mondiale avant d'être de nouveau contrôlée par l'Union soviétique pendant de nombreuses décennies après le retrait des nazis.

Ukraine has been an independent member of the family of nations since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991.

Mr. Speaker, our Legislature unanimously passed the Holodomor Memorial Day Act in April 2009. It was the first private bill of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario sponsored by all three parties. This consensus reflects the support all Ontarians have for our Ukrainian friends and neighbours who lost loved ones during those terrible times.

Ukrainians have been coming to Canada since 1891. Today, Ukrainian Canadians are the country's ninth-

largest multicultural group, and Canada boasts the world's third-largest Ukrainian population, behind Ukraine itself and Russia.

1520

L'Ontario a la chance de bénéficier de la présence d'une communauté ukrainienne forte et dynamique qui l'enrichit sur les plans social, culturel et économique.

The largest Ukrainian communities can be found in Toronto, Hamilton, Ottawa, St. Catharines, Niagara and Thunder Bay, respectively, as well as many smaller towns.

The people of Ontario admire Ukrainians' strong sense of faith and community, their work ethic and their commitment to public service in Canada.

Speaker, this week we remember the tragedy of the Holodomor and pay tribute to the strength and resilience of the people of Ukraine. We salute their ability to survive and start new lives here in Ontario and elsewhere.

Nous partageons leurs espoirs pour une vie dans la paix et la prospérité en Ontario et au Canada.

We share their hopes for a lifetime of peace and prosperity in Ontario and Canada, and we reaffirm our commitment to democracy, human rights, and the rule of law to prevent another Holodomor.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is time for responses.

Mr. John Yakabuski: As we begin National Holodomor Awareness Week, I join with Ukrainians in Ontario, in Canada and around the world to remember the victims of the Holodomor, the Ukrainian genocide. Holodomor was a famine in which it is estimated as many as 10 million Ukrainians, many of whom were children, were targeted and intentionally and systematically starved to death in 1932 and 1933 by the Communist dictator Joseph Stalin. Stalin was punishing Ukrainians for resisting Soviet rule. Soviet authorities confiscated all food grown by Ukrainian farmers. Although the harvest was rich, Ukrainian people were forbidden to touch it. Anyone, including children, caught taking even a stalk could be executed. Special squads were dispatched to search homes and forcibly take all food from Ukrainian people, ensuring a mass famine would ensue.

These targeted and international crimes turned Europe's bread basket into a land of immeasurable human suffering. While millions were dying of starvation, the Soviets took the wheat the Ukrainians had produced and sold it abroad. This genocidal famine was denied, ignored and covered up throughout much of the 20th century. Despite decades of oppressive rule, Ukrainians refused to abandon their drive for freedom and independence.

This past year, I became more acquainted with the history of the Holodomor as I had the incredible honour of meeting a few Holodomor survivors, as well as their children and grandchildren. This past May, we hosted a Holodomor awareness night with our leader, Patrick Brown, and our caucus. We heard narratives from speakers from the League of Ukrainian Canadians, the Holodomor National Awareness Tour, the Holodomor

Research and Education Consortium and other organizations. Hearing the historical facts and figures and stories of suffering, trauma and personal tragedy gave me much food for thought and reflection.

However, an innate part of all these stories was incredible courage, determination, a fight for freedom and a message of hope. I am truly amazed at the incredible work the Ukrainian community in Canada has been doing and continues to do to educate us fellow Canadians about the dark depths that humanity can sink to, but also about the unbreakable spirit of Ukrainian people.

Whether it is the Holodomor bus—which I highly encourage all members to visit when they have the opportunity—the updates to our school curricula or the efforts to erect a memorial to the victims of the Holodomor in Toronto, I applaud Canadians of Ukrainian heritage for these important initiatives.

Today, Ukraine faces new challenges to her territory and independence. Once again, Ukrainian people have demonstrated and continue to demonstrate their unyielding commitment to human dignity. Ukraine's current struggle for freedom and democracy is a testament to the unbreakable spirit of its people and honours the memory of the many who perished under Stalin's brutal rule.

Canadians of Ukrainian heritage who have made many significant contributions to this province and this country over many generations have been key in ensuring that we properly honour the memory of those who perished in one of the greatest tragedies of the last century.

In Ontario, the fourth Saturday of November in each year is proclaimed Holodomor Memorial Day to memorialize those who perished as victims of the genocide by famine that occurred in Ukraine in 1932 and 1933.

Throughout this week and in the days ahead, many events will be held across Canada to commemorate the Holodomor. I will be honoured to attend one such commemoration this Saturday in Etobicoke, organized by the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, together with my PC leader, Patrick Brown.

By commemorating the victims of Holodomor, we remind Ontarians that we share a responsibility to advance freedom, human rights and the rule of law, and to oppose tyranny in all its forms.

Today, I join all Ontarians, particularly Ontarians and Canadians of Ukrainian origin, in solemnly marking the anniversary of this most heinous crime against humanity.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm extremely proud to rise on behalf of the Ontario New Democratic caucus and our leader, Andrea Horwath, and as a Canadian and a member of provincial Parliament of Ukrainian descent. Today we commemorate those who lost their lives during the Holodomor, more commonly known as the famine genocide of millions of Ukrainians from 1932 to 1933.

The following have officially condemned the Holodomor and recognized it as a genocide: the government of Ukraine, the United States House of Representatives, the United States Senate, the Senate of Canada, UNESCO, the United Nations, and over 40 other jurisdictions around the world.

Survivors of the Holodomor and their descendants are parts of our communities. We must remember them. There are over 300,000 people of Ukrainian origin here in Ontario. Many have direct family connections to this tragedy, as I do.

The Holodomor has been called the forgotten genocide, primarily because calling the actions of Joseph Stalin's regime a famine was forbidden in the USSR until the late 1980s glasnost period. However, the Holodomor, which is translated into English as "to kill by hunger," was a famine. It was catastrophic in its scale, and its scale remains unknown even today. Although it is estimated that at least four million Ukrainians were killed, possibly as many as 10 million victims suffered under the regime.

I would like to congratulate and recognize that the government of Ontario has taken the important step to introduce the lessons of the Holodomor into the provincial curriculum. It is, indeed, incredibly important that students of all ethnic backgrounds understand not only that the events took place but what a genocide is and what it looks like, and our responsibility as a developed country to intervene and to act and to learn from what has happened in the past.

Speaker, the famine was manufactured by Stalin's regime as a genocide of the Ukrainian people. Farms were forced to fill impossible grain quotas. Food was taken, leaving villages with absolutely nothing. One Holodomor survivor who came to Toronto, Mykola Latyshko, said in 2008, "Those who protested were beaten up, quite often to death. Those who were protesting even more were simply shot in front of their children, wives, mothers." There are also many stories from survivors of those desperate to survive having to resort to cannibalism.

We must remember what happened in 1932 and 1933. In Ontario, we mark the fourth Saturday of November as Holodomor Memorial Day. On November 23, please take a moment to remember. The Ukrainian communities across Ontario will be remembering, and as a Canadian of Ukrainian descent, so will I.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their kind statements.

PETITIONS

HYDRO RATES

Mr. John Yakabuski: I have a petition here signed by literally thousands—I'll just get the bigger one so I can actually read it; the writing is so small—in my riding of Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

1530

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas electricity rates have risen by more than 300% since the current government took office; and

"Whereas over half of Ontarians' power bills are regulatory and delivery charges and the global adjustment; and

"Whereas the global adjustment is a tangible measure of how much Ontario must overpay for unneeded wind and solar power, and the cost of offloading excess power to our neighbours at a loss; and

"Whereas the market rate for electricity, according to IESO data, has been less than three cents per kilowatt hour to date in 2016, yet the government's lack of responsible science-based planning has not allowed these reductions to be passed on to Ontarians, resulting in electrical bills several times more than that amount; and

"Whereas the implementation of cap-and-trade will drive the cost of electricity even higher and deny Ontarians the option to choose affordable natural gas heating; and

"Whereas more and more Ontarians are being forced to cut down on essential expenses such as food and medicines in order to pay their increasingly unaffordable electricity bills; and

"Whereas the ill-conceived energy policies of this government that ignored the advice of independent experts and government agencies, such as the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) and the independent electrical system operator (IESO), and are not based on science have resulted in Ontarians' electricity costs rising, despite lower natural gas costs and increased energy conservation in the province;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To take immediate steps to reduce the total cost of electricity paid for by Ontarians, including costs associated with power consumed, the global adjustment, delivery charges, administrative charges, tax and any other charges added to Ontarians' energy bills."

I support this petition, affix my name and give it to page Charlie.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from Sudbury and Nickel Belt. I'd like to thank Mrs. Jeannine Kingsley from Hanmer, in my riding, for signing the petition. It goes as follows:

"Whereas once you privatize Hydro One, there's no return; and

"Whereas we'll lose billions in reliable annual revenues for schools and hospitals; and

"Whereas we'll lose our biggest economic asset and control over our energy future; and

"Whereas we'll pay higher and higher hydro bills just like what's happened elsewhere;"

They "petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To stop the sale of Hydro One and make sure Ontario families benefit from owning Hydro One now and for generations to come."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask David to bring it to the Clerk.

HAZEL McCALLION

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I would like to present petitions in support of my bill, the Hazel McCallion Day Act. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas ‘Hurricane Hazel McCallion,’ former councillor and mayor of Mississauga, served continuously from 1968 until her retirement in 2014 in public office;

“Whereas Hazel McCallion, during her historic 36-year tenure as mayor, oversaw a period of transformation and growth for Mississauga into a modern, leading city in Ontario;

“Whereas Hazel McCallion continues to give herself selflessly to public life in support of charities, post-secondary education and the improvement of the city of Mississauga;

“Whereas Hazel McCallion’s career and lifetime of contributions are an excellent model for young people and women;

“Whereas women are underrepresented in public office and should be encouraged to participate in their full potential in leadership roles and service to their communities;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 215,” now known as Bill 16, “Hazel McCallion Day Act, 2016, into law to honour Hazel McCallion’s lifetime of contributions to the community and to encourage women to become more active in public life.”

I support this petition, affix my signature and give it to page Jackson.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Jim Wilson: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Stevenson Memorial Hospital is challenged to support the growing needs of the community within its existing space as it was built for a mere 7,000” emergency room “visits per year and experiences in excess of” 35,000 “visits annually; and

“Whereas the government-implemented Places to Grow Act forecasts massive population growth in New Tecumseth, which along with the aging population will only intensify the need for the redevelopment of the hospital; and

“Whereas all other hospital emergency facilities are more than 45 minutes away with no public transit available between those communities; and

“Whereas Stevenson Memorial Hospital deserves equitable servicing comparable to other Ontario hospitals;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Kathleen Wynne Liberal government immediately provide the necessary funding to Stevenson Memorial Hospital for the redevelopment of their emergency department, operating rooms, diagnostic imaging

and laboratory to ensure that they can continue to provide stable and ongoing service to residents in our area.”

Mr. Speaker, I agree with this petition and I will sign it.

CHILD CARE

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I have a “Petition for a Universal, High-Quality Child Care System in Ontario.” I’d like to thank one of my constituents, Karen Finley, for sending this in. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014 commits Ontario to ‘a system of responsive, safe, high-quality and accessible child care and early years programs and services that will support parents and families, and will contribute to the healthy development of children’;

“Whereas recent community opposition to Ontario’s child care regulation proposals indicates that a new direction for child care is necessary to address issues of access, quality, funding, system building, planning and workforce development;

“Whereas Ontario’s Gender Wage Gap Strategy consultation found ‘child care was the number one issue everywhere’ and ‘participants called for public funding and support that provides both adequate wages and affordable fees’;

“Whereas the federal government’s commitment to a National Early Learning and Child Care Framework provides an excellent opportunity for Ontario to take leadership and work collaboratively to move forward on developing a universal, high-quality, comprehensive child care system in Ontario;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To undertake a transparent policy process with the clear goal of developing a universal early childhood education and child care system where all families can access quality child care programs; and

“To publicly declare their commitment to take leadership in developing a national child care plan with the federal government that adopts the principles of universality, high quality and comprehensiveness.”

I agree with this 100%, will sign it and send it to the table with page Will.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Ms. Daiene Vernile: This is a petition titled “Protecting Rewards Points Earned by Ontario Consumers.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas many companies are moving to or have already implemented new policies applying expiry timelines to rewards points collected under their programs; and

“Whereas such an action is unreasonably punitive to consumers; and

"Whereas consumers are effectively exchanging personal information in return for access to these rewards programs in a transaction-like exchange;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"To protect consumers by amending the Consumer Protection Act, 2002, to prohibit the expiry of rewards points, and to credit them back to accounts where expiry has occurred."

Speaker, I agree with this petition, will put my initials to it and hand it to page Reagan.

DEMENTIA

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) is developing a dementia strategy for Ontario; and

"Whereas the projected growth of Ontario's senior population in the coming years will drive up demand for dementia services and supports; and

"Whereas a strong dementia strategy requires adequate funding by the government;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"(1) To develop and publish a dementia strategy for the province of Ontario;

"(2) To provide sufficient funding to implement the plan in full."

I agree with this petition and will pass it off to the page.

SPEED LIMITS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'd like to read this petition that was organized in memory of Julie. It reads as follows:

"Whereas driving at a high rate of speed has contributed to many fatal snowmobile accidents on lakes and rivers across Ontario; and

"Whereas the safety of individuals is put at risk when snowmobiles are driven at a high rate of speed on lakes, rivers and within close proximity to people, ice huts and other vehicles; and

"Whereas section 14 of the Motorized Snow Vehicles Act ... states:

"No person shall drive a motorized snow vehicle at a greater rate of speed than,

"(a) 20 kilometres per hour,

"(i) on a highway where the speed limit is established, or

"(ii) in any public park or exhibition grounds; or

"(b) 50 kilometres per hour,

"(i) on any highway which is open to motor vehicle traffic, or

"(ii) on a trail"....

They "petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows"—they want to add that:

"(a) No person shall drive a motorized snow vehicle at a greater rate of speed than,

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"(i) 20 km per hour within 200 feet of any person, ice hut or other vehicles

"(ii) 80 km per hour on frozen waterways

"(iii) set speeding fine for driving in excess of 20 km/h when within 200 feet of person, ice hut or vehicle

"(iv) set speeding fine for driving in excess of 80 km/h on a frozen waterway."

I support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Charis to bring it to the Clerk.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further petitions? This is a gold-standard moment. I recognize the member from St. Catharines.

Mr. James J. Bradley: Thank you very much.

HOME INSPECTION INDUSTRY

Mr. James J. Bradley: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas home inspectors are an integral part of the real estate transaction; and

"Whereas there are no current rules and education system to qualify who is and who is not a home inspector; and

"Whereas the public interest is best served by protecting consumers against receiving a bad home inspection;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Ensure the speedy passage of Bill 59, Putting Consumers First Act, 2016, and mandate the government of Ontario to bring in a strong qualifications regime for home inspectors."

I sign this petition and submit it to the table.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontario's growing and aging population is putting an increasing strain on our publicly funded health care system; and

"Whereas since February 2015, the Ontario government has made an almost 7% unilateral cut to physician services expenditures which cover all the care doctors provide to patients; and

"Whereas the decisions Ontario makes today will impact patients' access to quality care in the years to come and these cuts will threaten access to the quality, patient-focused care Ontarians need and expect;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return to the table with Ontario's doctors and work together through mediation-arbitration to reach a fair deal that protects the quality, patient-focused care Ontario's families deserve."

I support this petition, affix my name to it and give it to page Fallon to take to the table.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition called “Time to Care,” and I would like to thank Madame Reina Labelle from Hanmer, in my riding. It reads as follows:

“Whereas quality of care for the 77,000 residents of” long-term-care “homes is a priority for many Ontario families; and

“Whereas the provincial government does not provide adequate funding to ensure care and staffing levels in” long-term-care “homes to keep pace with residents’ increasing acuity and the growing number of residents with complex behaviours; and

“Whereas several Ontario coroner’s inquests into” long-term-care “homes deaths have recommended an increase in direct hands-on care for residents and staffing levels and the most reputable studies on this topic recommends 4.1 hours of direct care per day;

They petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“Amend the LTC Homes Act (2007) for a legislated minimum care standard of four hours per resident per day adjusted for acuity level and case mix.”

I support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask Kaitlyn—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you.

HOME INSPECTION INDUSTRY

Mr. Joe Dickson: It’s a pleasure to present this petition.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the home inspector industry remains largely unregulated; and

“Whereas homeowners are increasingly reliant on home inspectors to make an educated home purchase; and

“Whereas the unregulated industry poses a risk to consumers;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To protect consumers by regulating the home inspection industry and licensing home inspectors.”

I will pass this to Henry—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you.

Mr. Joe Dickson: That’s one of my favourite chocolates.

SENIORS’ HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Raymond Sung Joon Cho: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Residential Tenancies Act protects tenants in dwellings, long-term-care homes and retire-

ment homes from sudden and unfair increases to their rent; and

“Whereas additional costs such as the provision of meals and other services are not subject to the said act; and

“Whereas there have been episodes of repeated, large and unjustified increases to the stated costs of meal provisioning in Cornwall and area; and

“Whereas residents do not have a say in the procurement and administration of meals and other services provided by the facility, nor can they opt out of such services when notified of an increase in charges, being thus committed to a ‘take it or leave it’ choice;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“(1) To instruct the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing to enact regulations ensuring fairness, protection and choice for residents of retirement homes and long-term-care facilities that provide any other necessary service such as, but not limited to, meals and personal assistance at extra cost to their residents;

“(2) To instruct the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to undertake a comprehensive review of the administration of retirement homes and long-term-care facilities with respect to the provision of services other than lodging that involve an extra charge to residents.”

I agree.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The time for petitions has now expired.

Orders of the day.

OPPOSITION DAY

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, I move that whereas hydro rates in Ontario are the highest of any province in Canada;

Whereas the Liberals wasted \$300 million on energy scandals, including paying \$12 million for consultants instead of hydro relief for low-income families, losing a \$28-million lawsuit to Windstream, an \$81-million accounting error, and losing \$179 million in a court case with energy producers;

Therefore, the Legislative Assembly calls on the Liberal government to:

—issue a formal apology to the people of Ontario for their scandal, waste and mismanagement; and

—in an effort to reduce rates, stop any future sale of the shares of Hydro One; and

—stop signing energy contracts for power Ontario does not need.

This is addressed to the Premier.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Mr. Brown has moved opposition day motion number 4. Back to the leader of the official opposition.

Mr. Patrick Brown: It is a pleasure to rise here in the House today in support of the Ontario PC caucus opposition day motion.

This weekend, in front of a crowd of party faithful, the Premier finally took ownership for her government's terrible, terrible energy policies. The Premier finally acknowledged that skyrocketing electricity prices were her mistake. I'll be one of the first to say congratulations to the Premier. Congratulations on coming to grips with what everyone in Ontario already knew.

Now, if the House will oblige, I want to give a quick history lesson, back to just a few short months ago. Our Premier, just a few months ago, refused to admit she had made a mistake on hydro prices, under a barrage of questions from opposition members of all parties during question period. Everything was fine. Everything was rosy. There was no concern with electricity prices.

Our Premier wasn't apologizing for bad Liberal energy policies when she got booed at the plowing match. Back then, everything was rosy. The Premier wasn't taking ownership for skyrocketing rates on her tour of northern Ontario in the summer. Instead, she was blaming everyone else. In question period, "Nothing's wrong"; at the plowing match, "Nothing's wrong"; in northern Ontario, "Nothing's wrong"—despite the fact that everyone, from every community, is complaining about the skyrocketing electricity rates.

If you had asked the Premier just a few months ago, she would have told you that if there was any problem, blame previous governments. Blame Mike Harris. Blame Leslie Frost. Blame Mitch Hepburn. She was blaming people who were there even before the member for St. Catharines. The excuses, Mr. Speaker, were unbelievable. I think the Premier began to realize that no one was believing these excuses, hence we have this admission that this is her fault, that these are her policies.

It might have been what happened in September, too. In September, the Liberals lost a by-election in Scarborough-Rouge River, a seat they had never lost before, a seat they never even dreamed they could lose, and they scrambled. They scrambled and they came up with a band-aid solution for the people of Ontario equivalent to a cup of coffee a month.

They had their MPPs tour the province touting their band-aid solution. Maybe they hoped that people would forget about these skyrocketing hydro bills.

1550

But still, the Premier didn't apologize after Scarborough. The Premier still refused to admit that skyrocketing electricity prices were everyone else's mistake but hers. But then last week the Liberals got crushed in Niagara West-Glanbrook, falling all the way to third place, the government party for the first time finishing in third—a distant third. And in the Liberal fortress of Ottawa-Vanier, the Liberals' safest seat in the province, their margin crumbled almost in half.

What that shows is that, finally, the Premier is seeing these numbers crumbling, seeing Ontarians irate across the province. Then, when it appeared to affect the Liberal

Party's self-interest, the Premier admitted that this was her mistake, this was this government's blunder. It's not a problem for the Premier until it's a Liberal Party problem. That's what this is about. It started to affect the government's own self-interest.

What's disturbing about that is, you'd think it should have been acknowledged by the Premier when she heard the news—not that it was affecting Liberal seats, but that there were 567,000 Ontario families in arrears. Can you imagine that, Mr. Speaker? There are 567,000 Ontario families in arrears. They can't pay their hydro bills, but it doesn't bug the government, it doesn't bug the Premier that Ontarians can't afford their hydro bills. It only bugs them when they lose a seat that they had for decades and decades.

Mr. Speaker, one in 20 Ontario businesses report they expect to shut down in the next five years because of skyrocketing hydro rates. That's astonishing. It's not a problem for the government when 81% of Ontarians are concerned the skyrocketing rates will impact the health of our economy. That's across the board—81%. It's not a problem for the government when families are being forced to choose between heating and eating. But when it starts to affect their electoral fortunes, all of a sudden we see the government change their tune.

The Premier didn't have the gall to state the mistakes the government made. Was it a mistake? It's one thing to apologize, but are you actually going to change course? Is the government going to acknowledge that it was a mistake to spend \$12 million on consultants and advertisements instead of hydro relief for low-income families? Was it a mistake to dole out \$9 billion in energy contracts to Liberal donors? That's not right. Will they finally admit that their fire sale of Hydro One was foolish and reckless? We don't hear the Premier saying that. It's one thing to apologize, it's one thing to say you've made a mess of the hydro sector, but it's another thing to actually change the foolish policies.

Mr. Speaker, I want the Premier to say and finally acknowledge that it is a mistake to continue shipping out billions of surplus energy to Michigan, Ohio and Pennsylvania. When are we going to hear the Premier say that? Unfortunately, the Premier's admissions of guilt and half-apologies just don't cut it. Words amount for only so much. The people of Ontario want to see real action. If the Premier really thought that her government was to blame, if she was really sincere about her apology, then she would announce that she's immediately going to stop the fire sale of Hydro One. That did not happen. If the Premier really accepted the blame and her apology was sincere, she would have stopped signing energy contracts for power Ontario doesn't need, but she's not doing that.

If the Premier really was sorry, instead of admitting her mistakes in front of the party faithful and loyalists, she would apologize in front of the people of Ontario in every single riding in Ontario. The Premier has already pledged to visit every single riding. Will she pledge to apologize in every single riding? Because every single

riding in the province right now is hurting because of this Premier and this government's reckless energy policy.

Finally, if the Premier really thought that bad Liberal policies were to blame, she'd have her Liberal caucus pass this opposition day motion. If they were sincere, if this apology was really an apology, they'd say, "You know what? We're going to do the right thing. We're going to support this motion." But I don't think she'll have them pass this motion. They like to double down on wrong positions. I don't think the Premier is actually sorry. I don't think the Premier actually wants to accept the blame. I think her government is going to continue down the same road of terrible energy policies. Rates will continue to skyrocket, and life will continue to get harder in Ontario.

I hope the Premier can prove me wrong. I hope this Liberal caucus will prove me wrong and vote for our motion today. Prove us wrong. Do the right thing for Ontario and pass this motion today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: It's my pleasure to rise on behalf of my constituents in Windsor West to speak to the PC opposition day motion, which is basically to stop the sell-off of Hydro One.

Speaker, I've done some research. I've dug up some things that were before my time here in the Legislature, and I find them fascinating, so I'd like to share them with the people in the House and the people across the province.

I'm going to share with you an opposition day motion that was brought forward on May 21, 2002, by Dalton McGuinty, a Liberal member who was in opposition. Ernie Eves was the Premier at the time; he was a PC Premier. The first quote that I have from Mr. McGuinty's opposition day motion is, "It's time to slap a 'Not-for Sale' sign on Hydro One." That's a direct quote out of Hansard.

Then, I would like to look at what the current Premier said. On April 2, 2015—basically in response to that, I would say—Premier Kathleen Wynne said, "The fact is that we have to leverage our assets, and we have to work with the private sector."

So here we have one member of the Liberal Party, who went on to become a Premier himself, who said we need to say no to the sale of Hydro One, to put a "Not for Sale" sign on it. Fast-forward not even 14 years, and we have a Liberal Premier, who was a minister under Dalton McGuinty, who suddenly feels that the position of the Liberal Party should change and it's okay to sell off Hydro One.

I have another quote from Dalton McGuinty, from the same day, May 21, 2002. He had a lot of interesting things to say that day in his opposition day motion.

"I can't actually fathom contemplating a multi-billion dollar sale of anything without a good business case to back it up. We'll let that go for now, but the fact is not only is there no good reason to sell Hydro One, there are numerous very good reasons not to. For a start, it

happens to be making money. I want to say that again, because it doesn't seem to register with the members opposite. Hydro One is making money."

There are many things that I would not agree with Dalton McGuinty on—too many to list, in fact—but I happen to agree with him on that one. It's interesting that suddenly we have a Liberal government who actually justify selling off a public asset that's making money.

What's interesting to note, though, is that when Dalton McGuinty was speaking, he wasn't speaking to his party a little more than a decade down the road; he was talking to a PC government. The very party that's standing up here and being the champions of public hydro were actually looking to sell off the same asset that the Liberal government is.

He then went on to say, "What would possess the government, I mean any government, to sell an asset that generates 300 million some odd dollars every year?"

I'm not making this up. This is in the Hansard.

"This government should know that when you turn a natural public monopoly over to the private sector, it is the consumer who ultimately pays the price. Rates would go up. Rates could in fact go up dramatically and there is nothing consumers could do because, as I said, it's the only game in town."

Again, it's important to note that this was a Liberal member, who went on to become Premier—and we still have members on that side who were on his team when he became Premier—but he was actually talking to a Conservative government that was selling off Hydro.

Now we have quotes from current sitting members of the Liberal Party that seem to completely contradict what Dalton McGuinty was saying back in 2002. "We're getting value for the sale and the broadening of Hydro ownership, and we're investing in transit, in infrastructure." That is the now Minister of Energy, quoted on September 26.

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So here we have a Liberal member, who was saying that you shouldn't be selling off Hydro in order to be investing in things because, in fact, it makes money to go back into things like infrastructure; fast-forward to a Minister of Energy, who is saying, "Well, you know what? We realize that we're not capable of doing the job properly and managing what we have, so we're going to sell off a money-generating asset in order to be able to meet promises that we've made."

Then, we have another quote from a current sitting Liberal member: "We have to pay for that, and that's why we're looking at our assets to see how we can recycle those assets to build the infrastructure of tomorrow." That's the Deputy Premier saying, "You know—okay, we don't really agree with what we were saying in 2002. In fact, we don't really know how to pay for the promises we've made. We don't know how to manage this income-producing, revenue-generating tool that we have, so we're just going to sell it off in order to try to meet promises that we've made."

It's interesting to see that we have Liberals, at one point, who very strongly opposed the sell-off of Hydro

One, and now we have Liberals who justify the sell-off of Hydro One. I'm not quite sure when their thinking changed, but I can certainly say that the people of Ontario—80%-plus of the people of Ontario—aren't sure why the Liberals feel they need to sell off our public hydro asset. The people of Ontario didn't give them the mandate to do that.

Then I also pulled something else that's a little more recent, which I found really interesting, because although I've kind of browsed through it, I've never really gone through it in detail. I thought today, since we have the Conservative Party bringing forward an opposition day motion regarding the sell-off of Hydro—opposing it—it might be interesting to research some of their more recent thoughts around the sell-off of our public asset.

I'm going to pull quotes from a May 2012 report written by the then leader of the PC Party, Tim Hudak, and signed off on—in fact, his picture is right on it—by Vic Fedeli, the member from Nipissing. It was the white paper, and this part is specifically on hydro. If people haven't read it, the white paper is quite interesting. It covers all kind of things. If you want to know the Conservative record on anything—education, health, all kinds of stuff—there's all kinds of wonderful stuff in there. As they're standing up being the champions for public hydro, for public health care and for public education, you should go through it and actually look to see how they really feel. Their leader at the time, going into the last election, came right out and said, "Let's fire 100,000 people," so I think it's pretty clear, but there's some really interesting information in the white paper.

I pulled some quotes specific to hydro. This is the then, 2012, leader of the PC Party: "Establish a system where power is provided by companies competing to offer the best prices." We talk about language that isn't clear. We talk about how the Liberal Party says they ran on selling off our public hydro, and we say, "No, actually, that wasn't clear to the people of Ontario. That's not what they voted for." Here we have the Conservative Party using the same kind of language. Mr. Hudak then went on to say, "We are suggesting significant changes in who owns the electricity sector."

So I'm going to ask: What has changed from 2012—a platform that they ran on—to now? Because it was very clear in 2012 that their intention was to sell off Hydro, just as it was under the leadership of Ernie Eves. In fact—I could be mistaken, because it was before my time here—I'm pretty sure that it was a union, CUPE Ontario, that brought forward a lawsuit in order to stop the Conservative government from selling off our public hydro system. Fast-forward to now, to the current day: Lo and behold, it's like Groundhog Day, really. We have CUPE Ontario suing the current government to stop the sell-off of Hydro One.

Mr. Hudak goes on to say, "We are suggesting policy changes that will unlock the value"—interesting choice of words—"of the public's huge investment in the sector, while creating a more efficient system that relies on private capital in the future, not more public borrowing."

So this was a Conservative member, a leader of the Conservative Party, in 2012, saying that they want to "unlock the value" of our public hydro system. I think, if we dig back through the record, if we look at some of the reports in the media, if we look at some of the comments made from the Liberal side on this issue, they have used the same language.

Then Mr. Hudak went on to say: "We suggest opening both Hydro One and OPG to investment. The first step would be to negotiate a partial sale to Ontario's major pension funds. These funds are the largest in Canada and have a strategic demand for long-term investments. That initial sale could later be followed by a public offering of shares to both institutional and retail investors."

Now, I don't think it's any surprise to anyone in this House or anyone out in the public that the only party who has ever opposed the sell-off of Hydro One and our public hydro assets has been the NDP, has been New Democrats, has been this side of the House, our caucus. I just want to be clear on that, and I have records to back that up.

But I will say—and again, with Mr. Hudak, there's not a whole heck of a lot I would ever agree on either, probably even less than I would agree on with Dalton McGuinty. But at least Mr. Hudak was honest enough to put out there to the people of Ontario his intention to sell off our public asset, rather than using words that would be unclear to the people of Ontario, and then using that to say, "We actually did campaign on it."

I know my colleagues have a lot to add to it as well. I would love to read some of our quotes into the record as well, but quite frankly, maybe it's a little boring for some people in this House, because over and over again, we've said the same thing: Don't sell the public hydro system. Don't sell Hydro One. We've been pretty clear on our position.

I have one last thing I want to say. It's interesting, very interesting, that during Mr. McGuinty's May 21, 2002, opposition day motion to stop the sell-off of Hydro One, he said: "The soap opera that has played itself out over the past few weeks has not been worthy of respect. It has been worthy of nothing more than a channel change." And wait for it; this is a good one, because it relates directly to this motion and the party who has brought it forward. What he said about the PC Party then was, "We have witnessed flip-flops," and I think that's what we're seeing here today.

It's interesting; it's like he had a crystal ball. He knew that if we fast-forwarded to 2016, it would be the same story we were hearing from the PC government in 2002, which is that they haven't picked a lane, that they will tell the public anything they want to hear in order to get elected. And there's another quote in here from Mr. McGuinty about the same thing: about how the Conservative government of the day would tell you one thing, tell the next person something else and do anything they could to get elected.

Although history certainly shows that that's not case with the Conservative Party, my hope is that this isn't a

flip-flop, that this is a real commitment to the people of Ontario to stop the sell-off of Hydro One, and that if they were to actually form government down the road, they wouldn't do the exact same thing that the Liberal Party is doing right now; they wouldn't mislead the people of the province, that they would stand by what they say and they wouldn't sell off Hydro either.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I always find it interesting—it's an unusual privilege to serve in public life in two different provinces and two different orders of government. Having been the mayor of the capital city of the province just to the west is a source of enormous pride. Having grown up in Montreal and gotten politically active fighting for the federalist cause in referendums and having had the privilege of living in Ontario twice in my life, you realize what a magnificent and great country we live in. You also realize that we have a lot of things in common and we often lead and make different decisions in different ways.

I watched from the mayor's chair in Winnipeg the Harris government struggling at the time with a problem that, to be fair to them, wasn't entirely of their making. It was a problem that I think is laid at the feet of all political parties here: that for about 40 years, Ontario spent less per capita on infrastructure than any other province. As a matter of fact, from about 1968 on, Ontario started, under successive governments, to reduce its infrastructure spending on roads, transportation, subways, housing and energy, to a point where it was only spending a fraction.

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I watched this with great interest because at the time, when I was mayor, we were negotiating the sale of Winnipeg Hydro. Its dams and its transmission systems were being assessed and valued to be sold to consolidate with the provincial hydro utility, a single publicly owned utility. So we were paying great attention to that, and I remember the consultants we had saying to me, "Those people in Ontario must be crazy." You're taking a monopoly, breaking it up, and what you immediately do is you collapse the value of that monopoly, because a public sector monopoly, if not properly transitioned—and it's very hard to do this—loses value, because if you control an entire system, that asset has a certain value that it doesn't when it's just one of multiple players. And that's what we now call the \$28-billion stranded asset, that \$28 billion of lost asset value.

The Leader of the Opposition wants us to apologize. He's out asking for apologies. Well, I would suggest that his party apologize to Ontarians for the degradation of what was an asset that—Quebec didn't sell its hydro utility. Manitoba was consolidating into one. Because we got greater asset value by having one utility in Manitoba rather than two, we saw our asset and public value increase.

They have to have known that, Mr. Speaker, because during that period of time in the 1990s and the early part

of the first decade, everyone understood that because everyone was looking at their utilities and their hydro and their energy for a whole bunch of reasons. I anticipate that what's good for the goose is good for the gander, and the official opposition will apologize for precipitously and irresponsibly devaluing the public asset and putting \$28 billion of lost value on the bills, which our party and our government just finally paid off after 12 years of cleaning up their mess.

What else did they do in that underinvestment? Well, our nuclear plants, which were the pride of Ontario in the latter part of the last century, went wanting. As a matter of fact, the lack of investment by the parties opposite left decisions by the nuclear regulator in Canada in both 1996 and 1997 to declare that the nuclear fleet in Ontario was barely meeting minimum safety standards and was so badly invested that closure had to be considered.

What is the second big thing driving energy costs after stranded assets? It is the disinvestment in our nuclear fleet, and now, \$15 billion to refurbish one plant. Mr. Speaker, I ask, through you, to our friends opposite: Please explain to me why Ontarians have two or three sets of nuclear reactors that are doing repair and refurbishment work that should have been done 30 years ago, 40 years ago, 20 years ago.

When you and I ran, Mr. Speaker, we knew these things. These were front page news stories. The fleet was in trouble, safety standards couldn't be met and tens of billions of dollars of repair and maintenance on the nuclear fleet had not been done. I know the member from Leeds–Grenville was there, because he and I were mayors at the time. I remember when we went to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and one of the popular topics of conversation was the poor state not just of Ontario's nuclear generation, but the transmission system. One of the biggest expenditures in my Winnipeg days was the refurbishment of Manitoba's transmission system.

Of course, you know that when you're mayor or a Premier, you get these reports that compare your system to all the others. The opposition loves these things because they find any unfavourable comparison and that forms the basis of question period. They can't quite seem to explain that of the 10 provinces, no one came close to that level of underinvestment in transmission.

The third-largest cost now that we are struggling with with our electricity rates in this province is \$8 billion that we had to invest to repair and replace critical infrastructure—and that's not even including the damage that was done during the ice storm. We all know that much of the damage done during the ice storm was made quantum worse because the system was in a poor state of repair. Not only was it badly repaired by any reasonable standard, it was not up to climate resilience, because there had been no climate action planning taken on our basic infrastructure, because the governments of the day didn't believe in climate change. As a matter of fact, I have to commend the member for Simcoe North for his discovery a few months ago that climate change actually

exists. It would have been helpful to the wallets of Ontarians if he and his colleagues had discovered this a decade ago, like the rest of the world.

Miss Monique Taylor: What about you?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: We put in \$8 billion, to my friend from Hamilton Mountain.

So how do you finance infrastructure after 40 years of neglect? As a matter of fact, do you know how bad it was, Mr. Speaker? Total infrastructure investments in the last five years of the party opposite in power were hovering around \$1 billion to \$3 billion. That's less than a small province. The city of Winnipeg spends \$1 billion. Manitoba spends about \$4 billion. Ontario, for the entire province, was spending \$1 billion to \$3 billion—less than a province of a million people. Since the official opposition is in the apology business, let me add that.

Maybe you could explain why you only invested a fraction of 1% of our GDP in infrastructure when everyone else in Canada was spending 5% or more. That has been recognized for 50 years as that. As a matter of fact, it was John Robarts, a very fine former Conservative Premier, who was the last Premier before we came into power who actually spent 5% of Ontario's GDP. From the 1940s to the late-1960s, Ontario led the country proudly under that party. They have lost their way for 50 years. And clearly today, since they find apologies poor substitutes for investment, that's what you will get—you'll get a party that wants to have it both ways, wants to change positions, wants apologies and can't explain their own program or how they would maintain Ontario now at the 5% threshold and exceeding it with the federal partners who finally did that.

The member from Simcoe North sat in a federal government that also happens to have had the worst record in modern times on investments in green energy and renewables and did nothing but pump money into fossil fuels and oil extraction. And the members of that government from this province sat back while billions of dollars of subsidies went into oil sands and zero came to Ontario for green energy, which was ironic since how many of them were former Conservative cabinet ministers who oversaw the lost decade of energy here.

Then what about health, Mr. Speaker? Since we closed coal plants, premature deaths in hospitals from respiratory-related illnesses have dropped by 23%, and 41% since 2004. That is one of the biggest health improvements—loss of asthma—in seniors going healthy. We recognized, as the Premier did—because she demonstrates a certain amount of humility. Of 107 politicians in here, and three leaders, I've only heard one ever actually have the courage and decency to say, "Sometimes we make mistakes because we're just human like the other 14 million people and, while we are very proud of our record here—we're going to double down and do that."

How are we doing that, Mr. Speaker? We're taking \$8 billion, the largest amount going into energy home retrofits—\$1.1 billion for low-income people in private apartments to dramatically reduce their emissions and cut those. We are going to retrofit every single residential

building in Ontario to net zero, which will be much less expensive. Already, companies like Sifton in London, Royalpark Homes in Barrie and Stanton in Etobicoke are building homes that don't come with heating and cooling bills because they have dura-thermal, they have heat pumps. They have those technologies.

We are leading a green revolution in low-cost, affordable, redistributive energy, which is going to be one of the biggest reductions. When you look at Switzerland and you look at other jurisdictions that have done that, we know it works because we can see it working, Mr. Speaker.

We have taken the HST off and we are now dealing with the other side over the next couple of years, having fixed the system, having decarbonized it.

1620

And who do they compare us to on rates? First of all, they don't understand overnight loads. We don't lose money on it. We're not subsidizing it in other jurisdictions. But they love to compare us to Quebec and Manitoba. Well, Manitoba is a province of a million people who, long ago, paid for its entire fleet of hydro dams. It's like competing with a business that's been in the family for five years and has paid off its mortgage. Manitoba makes a small fortune selling to US jurisdictions at a high rate of return, as does Quebec.

So find a jurisdiction that has closed coal plants, that has actually made the tough decisions that have given the health dividends, that have taken this city from 56 smog days a year to zero. Find a jurisdiction to compare us to that has shown that kind of bold environmental and health leadership.

Why are they having such trouble doing that? Because there's no comparator. No one has done it.

Mr. John Yakubuski: And no one has prices as high.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: They love Ohio and they love Michigan, and they punctuate those two states in every second sentence. They have coal plants. Talk to Governor Snyder. Governor Snyder now has to close not two, not five, but nine coal plants. Watch what happens to energy prices in Michigan now.

Ohio has twice as many coal plants to close, no green infrastructure, no hydro and no nuclear. Watch what happens to prices in Ohio.

Ontario already has prices below the North American average. By the time—

Mr. John Yakubuski: Oh, my God.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: —and the member for Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke, who wouldn't know a fact if it walked up and hit him in the face, Mr. Speaker. I will gladly send him all of that data shortly after I sit down.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, three problems—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Stop the clock for a minute, please.

All right. That's much better. I would ask that we show respect to the Speaker and that we show respect to each other in this Legislature. There will be no shouting

across the floor at each other while we have a speaker. I certainly hope that I have made my point clear. If there's any part of that that you don't understand, we can talk about it later.

Back to the minister.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I will withdraw that and apologize to the member. What I was trying to suggest was that I will share facts with you that show that this claim that we're the highest is not true and that, in most categories, we are very much in the middle of the pack.

My point simply is, with about 20 states now closing coal plants, our cost structure, because of when we did it and how we did it, will be much lower. Over the next 10, 20 years, because other jurisdictions have to meet climate change controls and decarbonize, they're going to have a very, very difficult time.

I just came back from Marrakesh, where the people from those states were saying the same thing. So this isn't Liberal government bumph; these are statements that those jurisdictions, who spent a lot of time talking to Ontario—we were very popular, because no one else has closed coal plants. I talked to Governor Snyder's people, and I talked to people in Alberta and Nova Scotia, who all have to close coal plants. They're all seized with how expensive it is to fight climate change. We were leaders. We didn't wait, and we're proud of that.

But what's driving our costs? Delayed investments and refurbishments that should have been spread out over generations, not builds left to today; the deregulation, at a time when no one else was doing it, that devalued our assets; and a complete neglect of our transmission system—for 10 years, we finally fixed those things.

Now it's our responsibility, and Minister Thibeault has laid those out. We will now work very hard, as we will through the climate action plan and the \$8 billion of investments we're about to make, to make life more affordable for Ontarians—to do that.

If they want to have a serious conversation about how we partner to face the greatest challenge facing humanity, called the climate crisis, rather than these nuisance, partisan little bills that are doing nothing but trying to divide and be provocative and political and superficial—if they want to have a serious conversation, we are game on for that.

If you want apologies, explain to us why the leader of your party denied climate change for 10 years, and the price we are going to pay in oceans—half of our fish population gone—the threat to our boreal forests, and already too much damage done that we can't reverse that legacy to our children, where we will now, because of 10 years of federal neglect on climate change, leave a less healthy, less biodiverse and more threatened climate than any other generation in human history will leave to its children.

Have some humility. Stop asking everyone else to apologize unless you are prepared to apologize for a pretty ugly legacy yourself.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's a pleasure to join this debate on our opposition day motion today. Our leader, Patrick Brown, has laid it out pretty clearly. And the Premier herself, speaking of apologies—the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change talked a lot about apologies. That's kind of what today is about, as well: the mea culpa that the Premier announced at their big convention in Ottawa this past weekend. Yet when she signed the document to authorize the movement of gas plants, did she think we had a problem with energy prices then, when she signed the documents that put into motion a billion dollars that the Ontario electricity ratepayer would be responsible for because of that order? Did she apologize for that? I didn't hear that.

Is she going to apologize now for the \$37 billion? Not that I'm saying people paid too much—but the Auditor General says the ratepayers of Ontario have paid too much through the electricity policies in this province under the global adjustment; they have paid \$37 billion more than they should have for electricity.

The minister talks about other jurisdictions. I never hear any stories about the citizens of other jurisdictions. When you go to Quebec or Manitoba or New York or Michigan, it is not the story on every street corner in every small town. The story is not how electricity rates are killing them and driving jobs out of their jurisdictions.

But it is the story here, and it's interesting that even a few months ago, this Premier and her new energy minister, who is under a terrible cloud of suspicion himself because of the announcement by the federal prosecutor that he believes—he has alleged that our Minister of Energy in this province of Ontario actually sought to benefit himself through benefit, jobs or otherwise—I don't have the exact quotes—by approaching high-placed people in the Liberal Party, that if he would run as an MPP, he would be rewarded. Those are the allegations, not of me—

Mr. Arthur Potts: Point of order, Speaker.

Mr. John Yakabuski: —but of the federal prosecutor.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I recognize the member on a point of order.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Deputy Speaker, I know you heard the speaker. That is way past the line impugning motive, and he needs to withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I've been listening closely to the member, and I would remind all members in this Legislature that when we are debating, we stick closely to the motion that we are debating and do not veer to the left or right, either way. I would ask that we would—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, we like veering to the left.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Excuse me. Thank you very much.

I would ask that the member continue and I will listen closely. Thank you.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you, Speaker. God, if I could just comment—I'm not challenging at all, but I

spent 12 and a half minutes listening to the Minister of the Environment not speak about the motion at all—at all.

But I digress. This is about electricity prices and it is about the policies of the government, and when the policies of the government are in question, then the Minister of Energy is part of that debate. What was announced yesterday by that federal prosecutor I think is of importance and of significance to every energy ratepayer in this province. If the minister of the very portfolio that they believe is in charge of determining whether or not they can pay their hydro bills, based on policy decisions—I think it is relevant. I think the allegations that were made by a federal prosecutor—not made in this House but made by a federal prosecutor—have a right to be debated. Decided in this House? No. This is not the court of law, but this is the place where these things get discussed and it is the place where the opposition has the right to question whether or not a member of the executive council should remain in that position while this cloud remains over his or her head.

1630

So back to electricity prices and the Premier's apologies, or lack thereof: Words are cheap, Speaker. That's one thing that we certainly know in this forum here. When it comes to the Liberal Party and this Liberal government, words are very cheap.

It is only because of people like Raymond Cho in Scarborough—Rouge River, who defeated their chosen candidate in that by-election back in September, it is only because of those kinds of events that all of a sudden the Premier of this province, Premier Kathleen Wynne, somehow decided that, yes, electricity prices are a problem, and, "I think I'll apologize to the people, because I'm really good at these fake apologies. I'm really good at saying I'm sorry. I'm really good at a little bit of crocodile tears and making the people somehow believe—hoping that they will believe—that we actually care about them and not the welfare of the Liberal Party."

Do you know what really matters to us, Speaker? What matters to us is that we're counting the days until June 7, 2018, because we want to make sure that we defeat those opposition members one more time.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Point of order. I recognize the minister responsible for women's issues.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Truly, Speaker, I feel the member is not speaking to the opposition day motion before us, and I look forward to your guidance on this matter.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I have been listening closely and I will make that determination as well.

I will go back to the member now. Please.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I would suggest that the minister read the motion. It's all about high electricity prices, and we are getting to why electricity prices are the way they are, and why, if the government supports this

motion, they will do more than go around the province telling people that they're sorry. They'll actually enact some kind of a measure, some kind of a change in policy that will actually help people.

I'm going to tell you, if you get your hydro bill next month, folks out there in TV land, and it says, right off the top, "Hi, I'm Kathleen Wynne, Premier of Ontario, and I'm sorry," the bottom line is going to be the same. It ain't going to change what the price of your hydro bill is. It isn't going to change what you have to pay every month, and that is what is hurting people in Ontario. That is what is killing businesses in Ontario, that is what is driving jobs out of Ontario. And that is why, no matter which member you are, including—finally, she's listening to the members of her own caucus. When you meet people on the street, or in any coffee shop in your riding, that's the number one conversation that you're having with your constituents. The members across the way know that, too. For Kathleen Wynne, Premier Wynne, this is not about helping people. This is about what she feels they must absolutely do in order to win the next election. They're not changing their policies to try to help people.

What Kathleen Wynne and the Liberal Party did with their energy policies—Speaker, if I could draw an analogy, and I'll do my best; it may not be the best. If someone hacks into your bank accounts and steals everything you've got, and you're living in poverty as a result of it, going to food banks—like people are because they can't pay their hydro bills—and living hand to mouth, and at some point that person says, "I made a mistake, and I'm really sorry. I'm going to try to make it up to you. Oh, but, by the way, the money has been spent. Sorry"—what good was the sorry, Speaker?

All of this \$37 billion that people have paid too much for; \$9.2 billion in renewable contracts that they paid too much for, that enriched friends of the Liberal Party, who received these astronomically exorbitant contracts to provide electricity that we didn't need at a price higher than the market, and we're selling that very same electricity to other jurisdictions at prices far below the market? How does an apology help the people that have paid this amount of money over and above what the electricity is worth?

Speaker, it is an insult to the intelligence of the people of Ontario, to think that, after the damage that these people and this Premier have inflicted upon them, all of a sudden an apology is going to wipe that all away? They will not forget. You might think the people aren't that smart, but I'll tell you, I've got absolute faith in the people of Ontario, and they are not going to be fooled by you or your Premier for one single minute.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Address the Chair, please. Address the Chair.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): The member from Barrie, come to order.

Mr. John Yakabuski: When June 2018 comes around, you just watch how they remember what you've done to them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate? I recognize the member from Toronto—Danforth.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker. I appreciate being recognized.

I think it's entirely reasonable to ask the Liberals to apologize for what they've done to people in Ontario with their electricity approach. Their initiatives have undermined the economy of this province. They've made life incredibly difficult for families. They've made it very difficult, frankly, for businesses to operate. For all of those reasons, Kathleen Wynne, who said that she had made mistakes and needed to apologize, needs to talk concretely about the things that she did that have made life difficult for people in this province.

I also think that, at the bare minimum—the bare minimum—the Liberals have to stop the sell-off of Hydro One. They've sold too much already. The idea that they would continue on, undermining this province, undermining our economy, undermining our households, is completely outrageous.

There's no question, Speaker, that the ongoing privatization of the electricity system by the Liberals, who followed the initiatives that were started by the PCs before them, have been detrimental to Ontario. The ongoing privatization: You can see it in the leasing of the Bruce nuclear power plant. That was something that was owned by the people of Ontario and now provides profits on an annual basis of over a half-billion a year. That money shouldn't be going to private owners; that money should be going to the people of Ontario.

Not only do we have a problem with private profits adding to people's hydro bills, we have a problem with these private contracts that have put us in a straitjacket because, the reality is, demand in Ontario has been falling for a decade, and that has been driving up hydro prices.

We all learned—everyone in this chamber learned—through the experience of the gas plants scandal that Ontario's system has been set up to protect private profit. Our ability to say, "We no longer need this particular piece of infrastructure" is dramatically hampered. It's handcuffed by this privatization. That is why the cancellation of those contracts was so expensive; that is why they were relocated: because we were on the hook for 20 years of profits—20, Speaker. That protection of private profits, that constraint on our ability to plan and manage electricity, has been a huge problem for Ontario. It has meant overproduction of power in the range of about \$2 billion worth of power every year, which we sell at 25 cents on the dollar. We lose money on those exports.

This is a government that has ignored all of that until it got into politically very choppy waters. Now it can see the water coming over the gunwales. They can see themselves in deep trouble. We're starting to get a verbal—a rhetorical—recognition that there's a problem. But never—never—have we heard the Premier stand up and say, "I was wrong to sell off Hydro One; frankly, I was wrong to not tell the truth about selling off Hydro One. I

didn't tell anyone when I ran in 2014, I denied it in the fall of 2014, and then I sold it." Speaker, not a word—a general sense that mistakes were made, but not the detailing.

There's no question that Ontario is going to have to continue to invest in renewable power because we have to make the transition away from fossil fuels. We will need those investments in renewable power, no doubt about it, particularly now that technologies like wind power are coming in at 6.5 cents a kilowatt hour—amongst the cheapest power in this province.

When I questioned the Minister of Energy a few weeks ago in estimates about the renewal of contracts with private gas-fired power plants, he would make no commitment that those contracts would be set aside. There's an opportunity to actually reduce cost to the system and give people a break. That power we don't need.

1640

I actually had a chance at public accounts the other day to look at a spreadsheet showing the cost of the different forms of power. Private gas-fired power in this province: 17 cents a kilowatt hour—17 cents—about two and a half times the cost of wind in this province.

This government should be looking for those opportunities to get out of those private contracts, bring generation back into public hands, balance generation with demand, and make the transition from a fossil-based system to a renewable, carbon-free system. That's what it needs to do. Instead, it's engaged in privatization, privatization and privatization. That's where it's headed. That is a descent into an economy that is going to be profoundly damaged for decades to come.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure to rise and speak to the opposition day motion.

An interesting day: The Leader of the Opposition started off by telling us that he was going to give us a history lesson. It seems we're going around and giving each other history lessons as to what happened, so I won't depart from that. But I do want to say directly to the Leader of the Opposition that, in fact, we do not have the highest rates in Canada. Electricity prices are a real pressure on families and businesses, and we know that. That's why we've done things like the OESP. That's why we have a number of programs for small and medium-sized businesses. That's why we've taken the HST off. That's why we've removed the debt retirement charge. That's why we've tried to address rural and remote rates. We recognize that. And by the Premier's own remarks this weekend, we have to do more to look at those people who are most dramatically affected by those electricity prices.

But how did we get here? How did we get to where we are? I would argue that we all hold responsibility for this, because we've all been in charge of Ontario's electricity system at one point or another.

We know that our costs—and the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change put it very well when he

said that we've got about \$8 billion in infrastructure costs that we had to undertake because successive governments failed to make those investments to keep that power system up to date, and it led to a reliability problem. We also got a stranded debt on top of that. We didn't pay the bills because we artificially depressed electricity prices. With that lack of investment—as a number of members have said—we ended up having a challenge in 2003. Our power was not reliable. We didn't have a reliable electricity system here in Ontario. What is the cost of reliability? What's the cost?

I know that we talked about the phasing out of carbon. One of the things that's really big in terms of a good thing is eliminating the coal-fired plants. We've heard about the health care costs. We have \$4 billion in health care costs saved; rates of childhood asthma are way down; rates of premature death are way down. It's hard to quantify the value of that, but I think we all know—all of us who have children and have aging parents—that those things are important to us. It was important to make those investments.

I want to have a bit of a history lesson. In debate yesterday, we had some discussion with the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, and I suggested that they need to pick a lane. I know that the Leader of the Opposition was in Vaughan last week doing a fundraiser and he credited Ernie Eves with shutting down the coal-fired plants.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Wow.

Mr. John Fraser: Wow. Now that's a whopper. With all due respect to Mr. Eves—who, of course, was a Premier of this province—I think we had some challenges keeping the lights on and a few other things.

I also want to say to the Leader of the Opposition: If you want to take credit for something, then you've got to take credit for the costs that are involved in that. You can't say, "Hey, we wanted to close coal-fired plants, but we didn't want it to cost any more." You can't have it both ways. You've got to pick a lane; it's one or the other. I think that's a real challenge that you have over there—

Interjection.

Mr. John Fraser: I don't want to go into that because I want to stick to the motion in terms of debate. I won't go down that road.

Let's go back to 1995: The Atomic Energy Control Board told Ontarians that they were considering shutting down our nuclear plants because of the number of incidents and their concerns over safety—1995. It didn't just happen in isolation one year that all of a sudden things were really bad in 1995; they got that way somehow. We were all there, right? The members opposite were there. The members opposite, over there, were there. We were there before the members over on the other side, in terms of our responsibility in the system.

It's nice to cry out for an apology, but I don't think—I can't support the motion because I don't think that that's actually productive in any way. I really don't. We have to be straightforward about what the challenges and the

pressures are in our system. We know that there are pressures on people because of electricity prices because of the decisions that we made—that people made in what they thought were the best interests. We had choices. Are we going to go to green energy? Are we going to get out of burning coal or not? We got out of burning coal. That had a cost. It was important that we do that, not just because it's good and healthy for our families, but in 10 years or even in five years, there will be a price on carbon. Even the Leader of the Opposition agrees on that. We are going to have to have an electricity system that fits into that world economy. No matter what's going on today, we're going to have to be there.

Now the other challenge—and the member from Toronto Danforth, who I have a lot of respect for, says that we have an oversupply of power. We do. But you want to know what? You've got to plan power—you're not just planning it five years out; it's seven years until you get a project. So you have to take a look at the growth in your economy to make those plans. Everybody will admit that we have a surplus of power. It's there. It's evident. You can find it. You can go to the web and find it in about 30 seconds. That information is available to people.

So here's your choice: Would you rather that we know the lights are going to come on? Or would you rather not? Can you can build an economy—and ask people in India about an economy where you can't rely on a source of power. Ask people in those jurisdictions where they don't know whether or not they're going to have power that day. There are some places in the world that are developing—California was that way, at one point, where there was no reliability in the power system. How can you build an economy on that? To be fair, I'm going to say where I stand: I think that you need to ensure that you have power there. I would rather have more than less, because you're not going to build an economy on less, that's for sure.

Back to what I was saying earlier: We all recognize, because we all see this in our own constituencies, with people who are having a really hard time not just meeting the pressures on their electricity bills, but other things in life—those are the things that we need to look at.

One point I wanted to make: The member from Windsor West asked, "What has changed?" I did mention earlier about Ernie Eves closing the coal plants even though he wasn't around. So what has changed is that things seem to change over there with some frequency, like, "I believe in this, but now I believe in that. I wrote a letter. I didn't write a letter."

You know what? Firefighters—and they were here today. Did everybody meet with their firefighters? Great bunch. I think if you go to the firefighters and say, "You know what? I really believe in interest arbitration," and then you go to municipal leaders and say, "You know what? Don't worry, we're going to take care of interest arbitration," it's no good saying to people what they want to hear because, once you land in the spot—gosh, I hope that never happens—you're going to have to make a

decision about what lane you pick. So you're going to need to pick lanes. I don't think that this motion is talking about picking lanes. I don't think asking for apologies when we all bear responsibility is an appropriate motion.

1650

I would like to suggest to the members opposite that we focus on the things that we can do for people, not on apologies. We have a debate. It's fair for us to disagree. That's what you're here for: You're here to push us. We're here to try to do what we believe is in the best interests as expressed not only by the people who we serve, but expressed by the members opposite. I take what every member opposite has to say very seriously.

But I think, if you want to put a motion forward, it might be a little bit better if you put a motion forward that speaks to what it is we can do for people as opposed to asking for an apology. I just don't think it's—I won't use the word that I was thinking because somebody might stand up.

I want to thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for letting me have this opportunity to debate. I look forward to the rest of it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Jim Wilson: It's an honour, on behalf of my constituents and the people of Ontario, to talk about this motion, which talks about the high cost of electricity and how that's hurting Ontario families and businesses and killing jobs in the province. But I want to just take about three minutes to dispel some of the myths that the government is spinning out there these days with respect to electricity.

I was the minister who broke up, in 1998, the old Ontario Hydro. Why did I do that? We had \$34 billion in debt. What did the Auditor General tell us just a few months ago? With all of the green energy nonsense, we have \$133 billion worth of liabilities in the electricity system. We paid off the debt retirement; you actually kept it on three years longer. That original \$34 billion dollars was paid off in 2012-13. You've more than quadrupled that, plus you kept the debt retirement charge on for an extra three years. That's the former Auditor General himself telling us that.

With respect to rates, you have among the highest rates in North America, but you have by far the highest all-in price in North America when you include delivery charges, which have skyrocketed. Delivery charges have skyrocketed because you have run high-voltage power lines down side roads that had regular power lines just to meet the two windmills at the end of the road or the two solar panels. You've done hundreds and hundreds of extra miles and incurred hundreds of millions of dollars in new costs. You forget to mention that to the people of Ontario. We're paying for every kilometre of that wire that wasn't necessary—you might want to remind people about that—just to fit your stupid green energy plan, which has turned out to be an enormous generational cost to the people of Ontario. I don't know how you're going

to get out of it. As was said today by many people, there's an apology from the Premier, but there are no concrete solutions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Address the Chair, please.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I want to talk about Hydro One. The issue first came up when I was acting leader, interim leader, and we said from the very beginning—our position has never changed; you spin that our position has changed, but it's not changed—that you should keep majority control. Maybe you bring in some private sector—because none of us, I admit, in any of the three parties, have done a good job of running Hydro One. If you wanted to bring in market discipline, you would bring in some companies to help you with that expertise on the board. But the people of Ontario didn't give you a licence in the last election to get rid of majority control and lose majority control at the corporate table of that corporation.

You're simply burning the furniture to heat the home. It's a disgrace, and eventually you're going to run out of furniture. The only reason you're doing it is you're broke because of your waste, mismanagement and, frankly, incompetent government in this province. So—

Mr. Arthur Potts: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Point of order.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I would appreciate it if he were addressing the Chair and not pointing fingers and calling “you” all the time in his remarks. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I have already addressed that. Thank you. You're wasting time. Continue.

Mr. Jim Wilson: The last bit that I have a minute for: You talk about the cost of closing down the coal plants. I've noticed speakers on the Liberal side and the Premier were on to that. The cost of power today is lower than it was—the cost to produce power, including without the coal plants. That cost has been absorbed into the system. It's been written about by many, many people.

If you look at the HOEP, which is the hourly Ontario price of electricity on the Ontario Power Authority—the IESO now—site, it gives you the minute-by-minute price. It's between two and three cents per kilowatt hour and has been over the last two years, on average. Congratulations, you're producing power at Bruce, at Pickering and at Niagara Falls at less than the five to eight cents it was when I was minister. It's the global adjustment and the delivery charges, the \$133 billion worth of debt, that is giving us the highest all-in electricity bills in all of North America. Tell the truth over there.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I'm honoured to join in the debate.

When it comes to the energy system here in Ontario, we need to first acknowledge that it is absolutely in a mess. The opposition day motion is an important motion

to get from this government a clear admission of their mistakes.

It's also very timely, the fact that this motion comes just after the Premier spoke to her party faithful and indicated that yes, indeed, she has made a mistake on this file. A formal apology goes a long way.

Let's talk about some of the problems in the electricity system. I think one of the things that the Liberal government is doing which is very damaging to the discussion around where we want to go as a society and as a province is that whenever someone raises the issue of high energy prices, the government quickly starts pointing fingers at the eradication of coal. The problem with this line of argument is that it opens up the door to those who want to see coal reinstated. When you start blaming the high energy prices on closing down coal, which is the right thing to do, you're opening up this wrong-headed area of discussion.

The reality is, if you look at the facts—the facts are pretty clear—the beginning of the problem, one of the major problems with the electricity system, is privatization. The privatization of electricity production, started by the Conservatives, opened up the door to many of the contracts which were quite costly, were not negotiated appropriately.

With these contracts for green energy, the problem wasn't the green energy, and every time you do this complaint and the Conservatives complain about green energy, they again venture down this path of saying that green energy is somehow wrong. It's not green energy that's at fault; it's the way the contracts were negotiated, and the way they were negotiated was allowed because the Conservatives allowed for the private production of electricity. If it was publicly produced, we wouldn't be in this position. If the Conservatives hadn't opened up the door and said, "You can privately produce electricity," it wouldn't have opened up the doors to these contracts that we've seen which have been so costly.

Using coal as an excuse for why energy is so high first opens up this wrong discourse which we don't want to enter into, because the real problem is the mismanagement. Let's look at the evidence. We have such clear evidence. The government has seen what happened. As soon as the production was privatized, costs went up. Now that they're selling off our distribution, privatizing the distribution, we're losing our ability to pay down the debt. It's a simple scenario.

We have had over the years a legacy of building up the electricity system, and we have some debt. There have been some bad decisions by the government, so we have some debt. Now, when the government sells off our hydro, we're losing a source of revenue. This is a fact. When you sell off 60%, then 60% of the revenue that used to go into the public coffers no longer goes into the public coffers. No one can challenge that argument, right? That argument is solid: 60% of the revenue we used to receive is now going to go to private hands. It's not going to stay in the province.

Well, that means 60% less revenue to pay down the debt with respect to electricity assets, so it's putting us in

a worse position. It's making it so that it's more difficult to pay back the costs that have been built up over the years. We have less of a capacity to do that, which is going to drive up electricity costs. That's a direct decision that this government has made.

On top of that, some of the key problems—the government has not been able to manage the electricity system in terms of ensuring that we produce the amount of electricity that we need, that we consume. The over-production of electricity has resulted in these very costly decisions to sell—not to sell, but to pay other jurisdictions to take our electricity. All of these decisions that the government has made are why costs are so high.

Again, I implore you: If you really believe in fighting climate change, if you really believe in addressing the problems that we face in terms of our environmental impact and the problems that we face with respect to the environment, please don't continue to blame and say that it's because you had to shut down coal plants that electricity prices went up. That's not the reason. Shutting down coal plants was the right decision and actually puts us in a better position for the health of the people of this province, but stop using that as a discourse because you open up the argument that you'll see some Conservatives and some folks who don't believe in addressing climate change start to say, "Well, exactly. It's because of that, and we need to now open up those coal plants." Just accept the reality: It's because of your poor management and your bad decisions with respect to the energy system.

1700

In addition, bills like Bill 135, which took away the transparent, evidence-based decision-making around electricity, took away the non-partisan decision-making around how to structure our electricity system in this province—passing bills like that, that resulted in the path that we've gone upon right now. When the government decided to make decisions in our electricity system based on partisanship, not looking at what's in the best interests, what's based on the data, not looking at what's the most effective way to provide electricity in this province, not looking at things from an objective lens, that was another path that this government went down that created the problem that we're in today.

Here's some advice. The argument that you raise time and time again that you're selling off the electricity system to build infrastructure—nobody buys that argument. First of all, the argument doesn't make any sense. It's a very simplistic argument, and if you start looking at the numbers, your promises are in the hundred-billion-plus range and the money raised by the sale of Hydro One only accounts for a net revenue that's going to go towards infrastructure potentially, maybe, of \$4 billion. You have promises that well exceed \$100 billion, \$130 billion, and you're raising \$4 billion. To suggest that you needed that \$4 billion to somehow fulfill a promise of \$130 billion just does not make logical sense. No one buys that argument. It's a false argument. It's just so shallow. It doesn't hold any weight. It's such a superficial argument. Anyone can see through that.

Then, on the other hand, you know that the revenue that you can generate is close to \$1 billion a year, then yes, it's probably better to borrow off of that revenue of \$1 billion a year than to sell it off and no longer have it at all and have no future source of revenue. Yes, it is probably better. I don't know why. I'm not an economist, but it's pretty basic to look at that. It makes a lot more sense to borrow off of a billion-dollar revenue than to sell it off and never have that revenue anymore. That doesn't make any sense.

And better than me giving you this advice, we have independent people who have looked at this decision as one of the worst decisions this province has ever made. The government likes to talk about the 407 any time one of them talks about selling off Hydro One. Yes, I agree with you. The sale of the 407 was a horrible decision. It was a horrible decision, but look at this: You don't have to drive on the 407. Many people don't drive on the 407. You don't have to use the 407. You have to use electricity. You're selling off something that's absolutely necessary. You're selling something that everyone needs and, as society moves forward, more and more people will need. We will need to move towards more use of electricity as we see vehicles that are being produced that are electricity-based. As we see society moving away from fossil fuels, we are going to become more and more reliant on electricity.

So, while you complain about the sale of the 407, at the end of the day you don't need to take that highway. It was a bad decision; don't get me wrong. That was a horrible decision. The government sold out the people of Ontario, the Conservative government absolutely did, but keep this in mind: You're doing something far worse. It's far worse because it's sold forever. This was a lease. The government sold off a lease. At least in 99 years we'll get it back. We'll get it back in 99 years. Are we going to get back the electricity system in 99 years? You can't nod your head to that because you know we're not going to get it back. In 99 years, we're not getting back Hydro One. Once you sell it off, it's gone.

I think this government needs to finally acknowledge their decisions just don't make sense. Their decisions don't make sense on an objective level. They don't make sense on a principle level. They're putting our province in a worse position than it was before.

This is the problem with these types of decisions: They're not only going to hurt people right now—and we know people in the north are struggling and people in rural communities are struggling because of this government's poor decisions around the electricity file—but you're creating a legacy that is going to impact future generations, because the sale of Hydro One is not just going to impact this generation; it's going to impact generations to come, future generations. It is going to forever impact this province. It will literally go down—and I'll tell you this now: When you read about this 10 years from now, 20 years from now, this will go down as one of the worst decisions ever made by an elected provincial government in the history of Ontario, this decision to sell

Hydro One. Without a doubt, it will go down as one of the worst decisions, and this is a legacy of the Liberal government. This is a legacy of a government that does not respect the people of this province, did not ask the people of this province to make this decision, did not request any sort of permission to sell off this public asset that belongs to the people of Ontario.

For 100 years, the people of this province built up the electricity system, they built up the transmission grid, and this government, with a stroke of the pen, without any sort of consultation with the people who built this up, has agreed to sell it off.

That's where we are. I think it's absolutely important for us to make sure we support green energy initiatives and make sure we blame the privatization and not the green energy initiatives, make sure we blame this government's mismanagement, the overproduction, the lack of objective decision-making, instead having subjective, partisan decision-making when it comes to electricity. These are reasons why we're in the position we are, and that's why we absolutely need to have a formal apology by this government. That is the will of this House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Arthur Potts: It's with mixed emotion that I speak to this motion here today, with mixed emotion that I speak to the motion, because it really is, as I think was identified by the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change, frivolous in the extreme. This is partisan political gamesmanship which really has so little to do with the critical issues around electricity pricing in this province, and it's just with a little, as I say, mixed emotion that I address it.

I know that the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has spent some time on this whole apology aspect of the motion. We had a fairly good discussion with the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change about why, if you really want to think about who needs to apologize here, there's a lot more reason on the other side of the House for apologies than there is, certainly, on this side of the House.

We've made much hay of the fact that this weekend, the Premier, as the minister pointed out, with great bravery, did a mea culpa and talked about—because we are an extraordinarily activist government doing a lot of things in a lot of different areas. We have fixes going on in a whole raft of different ministries, things that need critical attention and care too, and I think what the Premier said was, “I'm apologizing not for the things that we've done, but maybe for some of the things we haven't done, which was to pay closer attention to the hardships that were resulting from the very important fixes that we brought into the system.”

Let's be very, very clear. The Premier: It's her vision of infrastructure renewal. It's her vision of climate change and creating an electricity system in our province that is clean and green. She has much to stand up and be proud of and needn't apologize for a bit of it. But what she did say—and I was there at the convention, as so

many of my colleagues were. We were there at the convention and we heard the messaging, and the messaging was around that she understands, as we all do, the hardships that some people are experiencing with electricity pricing.

Right off in the throne speech, we were very clear that we were taking immediate action to remove HST from that—8% savings across. That's an important issue. We shouldn't be receiving government revenues on top of the costs associated with the clean, green, reliable system we have, so we pulled that back. And there's further recognition that in remote communities in the rural areas and the north, particularly for those who are struggling to heat on electricity alone, it's a disproportionate cost to rural Ontario compared to those in my community, for instance, who have the luxury of gas.

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The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke goes on about, “Every single member over there knows.” My constituents aren't up in arms about their hydro bills, to be very clear about that. I get calls; they're concerned. I ask them, “What was your hydro bill this month?” “320 bucks.” That's over two months in Toronto; a Toronto Hydro bill is over two months. So that's \$160 a month.

Then, when you point out to them that they're heating with gas, they're using gas in their stove, they're using gas for their water and that gas prices are at an all-time low, they suddenly realize, “Well, this is just a lot of hysteria.” It's a lot of hysteria that's drummed up by members of the third party, particularly in my community, where they have flyering at the subways and in the neighbourhood. They picket every single community hall meeting to stop the hydro thing, but the message doesn't carry. In my community, which was held by the NDP and the CCF for the last 54 years, except for a four-year break with the Tories, that message doesn't fly. It's not an issue for us, and it's not an issue for a lot of people who are serviced by natural gas for heating purposes.

Let's be very clear: The Premier has nothing to apologize for when it comes to fixing the transmission system. It's interesting to hear the member from Simcoe–Grey acknowledge in the House today his irresponsible role in both breaking up Ontario Hydro as it once was and destroying the combined assets of that corporation. Under his tutelage, under his direction, we ended up leasing out Bruce Power. You talk about the privatization of a generation asset—we're not doing that with our nuclear assets in the province. We made a very clear decision. That just wasn't on. But what we've done with Hydro One is very important. Under his direction under the previous administration, Hydro One had turned into the most dysfunctional of distributed electrical utilities in the province of Ontario. Just look at the report from the Ombudsman, *In the Dark*. They're talking about the legacy of the mess that was left behind with Hydro One across this province. What better way to fix it than to put some private sector discipline into it?

That's what we're already seeing. Customer survey reports at Hydro One are demonstrating that customer

satisfaction is way up—way up. By putting the kinds of customer service demands in place, Hydro One has accomplished an incredible purpose.

We also see it in the asset itself. While it first came out at \$21.50—I think the number was—the price per share has gone up to as high as almost \$27. If you take that 7% increase in value—we took a corporation by privatizing the operations of it, and we have increased its value by almost 10%. At the moment, we've only sold off 30%. But we've got the value of that extra 10% in our pockets, working to build better assets in this province. It is extraordinarily important.

We've heard a lot of debate here about excess power. I've said it in the House before: My uncle—my godfather, in fact—Larry Higgins, a wonderful man, a chief forecaster for Ontario Hydro during the period that we built our nuclear stuff, was very clear in talking about the surplus of electricity generation in the province: that, just like John A. Macdonald and his drink, a little bit too much is probably the right amount.

Speaker, understand that when you provide for an electrical generation system, it's important that you have excess supply to keep the system reliable. Right now, Speaker, I'll tell you, we're generating something on the order of 17.9 megawatts of power from various sources, and our demand is somewhere in the area of 16.8. Do the math: That's a little bit above 5% of excess generation over the demand. It's important to have that in the system, so you have the flow-through back and forth.

When we took over the transmission system, which was left as a legacy by the member from Simcoe–Grey, after that 2003 blackout—a bird on a wire and a utility in the US somehow shut down 60% of the power in our province because the system was so broken. Transmission lines were falling. Transformers were burning out. It was an absolute disaster. So we have nothing to apologize for there.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Don't make that stuff up. You're lying.

Mr. Arthur Potts: And I assure you that we have nothing to apologize—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I would ask the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke—first of all, if you're going to comment, you need to be in your seat. Secondly, I would ask that you withdraw.

Mr. John Yakabuski: From here or go there?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): You have to go to your seat, please.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Order, please.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Now, Speaker?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Now.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I withdraw.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you.

Back to the member from Beaches–East York.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you, Speaker, and thank you to the member for being decent.

I would like to say, we have nothing to apologize for, for closing the coal plants. We've already heard discussions about that. It was absolutely essential that we do that and replace the generation capacity of coal with clean, green energy, which we've also done.

I used to do work for Pollution Probe, and we would promote how many people were dying on smog days as a result of coal-burning plants. We would talk about that the equivalent of a jumbo jet would land and crash in the middle of the GTA every year, and nobody noticed because there was one death, two deaths or three deaths at a time in emergency rooms across the province. That has been reduced dramatically. We're very proud of that legacy. We've had a chance to rebuild the generation with clean, green, reliable power.

It is absolutely critical that our energy system—we've done the heavy lifting so that we are almost at 93% clean energy, on average, in the province of Ontario, because that's the advantage we now have in our climate change action plan to modernize our economy and move to a carbon-free economy.

I know the members opposite have trouble getting around the fact—are they with us in understanding and believing climate change is real? I would ask you all to take the 15 minutes to watch a YouTube video, which I had the pleasure of watching, from David Roberts, who is a writer with a group called Grist: Climate Change is Simple. He really does lay it out clearly so all members of the House will understand the pressure we are under in this province, in this country, in this world, to get it right and get it right quickly and get it right soon.

We've also heard a lot about this whole sale aspect of Hydro One. The apologies that need to come from the other side, Speaker, not from our side—but the apology from the other side around the 407 is absolutely critical. The big difference is, because we did it in tranches, we have guaranteed that we're getting the best value for our buck. We are guaranteeing that the taxpayers of Ontario are getting the best value for their buck. If you don't like the privatization of the hydro utility generator, Hydro One, why aren't you advocating—especially in the third party—to go out and make public, bring buying into the public realm, all the other distribution utility systems in the province, all 59 of them—

Interjection.

Mr. Arthur Potts: —72 of them. You should be out there, raising the money. Speaker, they should be out there raising the money to buy all the generation utility distribution, because that's their philosophy. That's ludicrous. They should also maybe be doing the same with the natural gas utilities, Union Gas and Enbridge. Let's bring them all under public ownership, so you can have your dream and your desire of having them all run as a government agency. That's just absolutely ridiculous.

I worry, Speaker—what does the member of the third party have against the private sector? They're creating the jobs in auto. They're creating jobs through—there's a good healthy mix. What we've done with Hydro One,

Speaker, is we still maintain effective control on major decision-making with our 40%. If you guys understood anything about corporate governance, you would recognize that 40% is a critical issue on any decision for which you need a two-thirds majority. We direct the board. We direct all major decision-making. That's critical. I appreciate—

Interjections.

Mr. Arthur Potts: We also know that the member from Simcoe-Grey, the legacy he left—when they did break up the two utilities, they buried the cost in general revenues. It wasn't until we came back into government that we could bring those costs so we had transparency again. They had artificially low rates. They pretended to the people of Ontario that they had cheap energy. They pretended it was all being paid for by higher corporate tax rates and higher personal income tax rates, by hiding the costs associated.

But we're not doing that, Speaker. We have a system that we have built out that's clean; it's green; it's reliable. Everybody in Ontario knows, when they wake up in the morning and turn the lights on, they come on—unless a storm has dropped a line. But we are doing great work in micro-grids for feeder-line situations, like we do in Penetanguishene, which will protect consumers in those communities with some battery backup storage and maybe some hydrogen storage, in order to ensure that they have reliable power that's clean and green every day.

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By building out an infrastructure of solar, wind and run-of-river, we have done more than any other jurisdiction in North America. If the members would just recognize it and apologize for the obstructionist attitudes that they take towards this issue, we'd all be much happier.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I think we'd better bring this debate back, because I felt a little like we'd gone down the rabbit hole in Alice in Wonderland. I'm going to actually talk about what the opposition motion speaks to. It says, "Whereas the Liberals wasted \$300 million on energy scandals, including paying \$12 million for consultants instead of hydro relief for low-income families, losing a \$28-million lawsuit to Windstream, an \$81 million accounting error, and losing \$179 million in a court case with energy producers..."

There are a million reasons why you need to support this resolution. It speaks to how much manipulation and rejigging the Liberal government has attempted to do on the energy file, and how much they have bollixed it. So I'm pleased to rise today to speak to my leader's motion calling on the government to lower hydro rates.

Last week, the Premier—on Sunday we all woke up to the newspaper where she was almost in tears, saying how it was a mistake and how she had made a mistake. The unfortunate part of the apology is that she didn't actually explain how she was going to undo it. That was the missing piece from this weekend.

My colleagues and I have been saying for years that this government's 13 years of reckless mismanagement of our province's energy sector has resulted in skyrocketing hydro rates. This government now has an opportunity to listen. More importantly, they have an opportunity to listen to everyday Ontarians and businesses who have been saying they can no longer afford the cost of hydro.

I know the government has been receiving calls, letters and emails from Ontarians, because we've been getting them. We're hearing daily from our residents in the riding who are being driven into, literally, energy poverty. We've also heard from businesses who are concerned they will have to close their doors if hydro rates are not addressed.

So Ontarians aren't satisfied when the Premier admits she made a mistake. They already know whose fault it is. They want some action. Ontarians aren't satisfied when it takes a Liberal by-election loss, and an internal poll that shows that 94% of residents want hydro relief, for the government to finally take action.

If the government had been listening, they would have heard concerns like the ones from an individual who wrote me, saying, "I'm so happy to hear you are addressing the rising cost of hydro bills.... I phoned my hydro company to verify my hydro bill from 18 months ago and they confirmed my electricity had doubled in 18 months. I was paying \$237, my new bill is now \$488.... I asked when most electricity is used, they told me that 90% is off peak, meaning I'm doing everything I was asked to do and yet are being penalized for it. As a family trying to make ends meet, how are we supposed to live?"

Another individual wrote me and said, "Our monthly hydro bills have been between \$395-\$400 a month! I make sure that I do my laundry after 7 or on weekends, pretty much all my lights in my home are off, I've even started to unplug appliances and still my hydro is high. I work full-time and my husband runs his own business in Orangeville. We are living paycheque to paycheque due to the cost of hydro. Something has to change. If prices go up any more I'm not sure what we will do."

This one is a little personal for me, Speaker. I had a friend of mine whose wife was very ill and passed away in July. From February to July, she used medical devices at home and had an oxygen concentrator, which was obviously working 24/7. His hydro bills by the time his wife passed away were \$1,400 a month. He said that it's probably going to take him a year to pay those bills. He doesn't begrudge the fact that he was keeping his wife at home. What he begrudges is that when he was at his most vulnerable, when his wife was palliative, he was getting dinged every single month by this government. It's a sad example of what medically necessary equipment can do to increase hydro usage. And there are thousands of people who have no choice when they use electricity.

Another individual wrote, "You want to see horror stories. There are people who have monthly hydro bills in the thousands. They are losing their homes because they can't pay. Elderly are sitting in the dark with no heat

because they can't pay. Wynne has done nothing but hurt the residents of Ontario with all the hydro increases because Hydro One is so poorly mismanaged." If a private sector company was trying to do the same thing, we would be turning them away. "Do the Liberals want to make Ontario a ghost province...?" Because they are going to do it in the way they're heading right now. "Businesses are jumping ship, jobs are scarce.... We need help and we need it now before they completely destroy Ontario."

I strongly agree, Speaker, and there is no one who is telling me that an 8% rebate is going to make any difference at all in their hydro bills.

As we head into the Christmas season, I'm thinking that the Liberal Wynne government is going to be the Scrooge that steals Christmas, because no one is going to be able to afford their Christmas lights. Have a good day.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Wayne Gates: Mr. Speaker, as you may have noticed in the last days, winter has finally made its way into southern Ontario. Before you know it, it's going to be Christmastime and families are going to be out shopping for presents. It's unfortunate, because I know that this year families are going to be choosing between presents and their hydro bill, between paying their bill and putting up Christmas lights. Just think about that, Mr. Speaker.

Interjection.

Mr. Wayne Gates: That's not an exaggeration, as my colleague from the Liberal Party just yelled over. People are actually being forced to choose between giving their kids a good Christmas or keeping the heat on. Hydro bills are actually going to be the topic of discussion across the province as parents struggle to figure out how they're going to pay their bills and provide a good Christmas for their children, or even put up their lights like they do every other year.

Mr. Speaker, in the province of Ontario, with the wealth and the talent and the drive we have, no one should be forced to make those choices. Unfortunately, it has already happened. People in this province are already being forced to make those tough decisions. I know that because they tell me every time I'm back in my riding, spending time in Niagara Falls, Fort Erie, Niagara-on-the-Lake and everywhere in between, listening to the people of all those communities.

Do you know what they're telling me, Mr. Speaker? Do you know? I'm going to tell you. They're telling me that they're struggling. Seniors on fixed incomes are telling me they can no longer afford all their medication, because they have to spend that money to keep their house warm. Think about that. You have diabetes; you have heart disease. So, instead of taking two pills—and this is happening. I want people to listen to this because this is what's happening. They need two heart pills a day. What they're doing in the province of Ontario because of hydro rates is, they're taking one pill instead of two, risking—

Interjection: Or none.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Or none—risking their lives. In Ontario, that's happening—and that's wrong. Seniors deserve better in the province of Ontario.

I'll tell you, businessmen and -women contribute so much to our province, and if something isn't done soon to address the high hydro rates created by the Liberal government and the PCs before it, they will have to pack up shop and head somewhere else, laying off workers.

There are places in my own riding, Mr. Speaker, like Mick & Angelo's, where I enjoy going, a locally run place, locally owned—a lot of workers there. He's telling me his business is being threatened by high hydro rates. It makes absolutely no sense in the province of Ontario.

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Hotel owners are coming to me, and those who operate the attractions at the Falls. Imagine that.

Interjections.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'd like you to listen to this. I know that a lot of people are talking, but I'd like you to listen to this because I think this is important. Operators of attractions at the Falls—imagine. They can see the Falls from their windows, generating cheap hydroelectric power, and yet their bills are going through the roof. That's happening when the tourists come to Niagara Falls. It's downright shameful that these wonderful people who call Niagara home are having such hard times because of the actions of this government—and the Premier refused to intervene.

Mr. Speaker, this weekend the Premier told members of the Liberal Party of Ontario that sky-high hydro rates were a mistake. You see, when you use a word like “mistake,” people get the impression that you didn't mean it when something happened, that these rates were accidental and that no one could possibly have seen this coming. Clearly, that's not what happened here. This was not a mistake.

Prior to 1905, hydro rates were 10 cents a kilowatt hour because they were private. Under a public system, they came way down, until the PC government of Mike Harris began privatizing our hydro system. Suddenly between 1999 and 2010, they doubled.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I'm having a bit of a difficult time. I counted about eight different conversations going on while the member from Niagara Falls was speaking. I would like to hear him. So I would ask that the sidebars discontinue.

I would now turn back to the member from Niagara Falls to continue.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'll try to go a little quicker, seeing I lost 30 seconds.

The evidence is clearly there, and they should have seen it coming. This was no mistake, as the Premier calls it. They knew what they were doing. It was no mistake when the Liberal government decided to cancel two gas plants and save a Liberal seat. They knew what they were doing.

It was no mistake when the Liberal government decided to sign outrageous 20-year contracts that locked us into paying too much for power we don't use. They knew what they were doing.

It was no mistake when the Liberal government decided to spend \$12 million on consultants rather than actually helping the people of Ontario. They knew what they were doing. That's \$12 million in tax breaks that this government gave to corporations that purchased our public hydro assets. Think about that, Mr. Speaker. They sold off Hydro One, and the companies that bought those shares got tax breaks. Not one cent was used to lower hydro bills to help residents in Niagara. The Premier believes these hydro rates are a mistake—fine. Use that \$12 million to give people relief on their hydro bill.

I talk about another workplace, Antica, another restaurant. It's the same thing going on: locally owned; locally delivered; local goods being served. They're telling me that hydro rates are killing their business. We can't have that. You know what's happening. Their hydro rates have skyrocketed. They're struggling to cover their bills.

Why not take that \$12 million and use it to give businesses and families a break?

Why not use it to give our local Legions breaks? I raised this in my member's statement. When we fail our Legions, we're failing our veterans. I go to as many Legions as I can. Their fish fries are incredible. They're staples of the community, and they're being let down by this government—or Fran and Laura, who own a home in Chippawa, whom I've raised here, about unaffordable hydro rates.

It was certainly no mistake when the Liberal government plowed ahead with the reckless sale of Hydro One, despite the fact that literally everyone except Ed Clark knew it was a bad idea. Can I see a show of hands? I know everybody is listening to this. Show me a show of hands. Who voted for Ed Clark? Put your hands up. Nobody.

Mr. Steve Clark: I voted for Steve Clark.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I don't blame you. That was a good call.

Mr. Speaker, 80%—it's now up to 94%—are opposed to the sell-off of hydro; 300 municipalities have voted and said no. Our elected reps are saying no to selling Hydro One.

For the Premier to call the crisis of energy poverty that she has created a “mistake” is simply not accurate. Let's be clear. The crisis she now finds herself in is absolutely the responsibility of the Premier, make no mistake about it.

I don't want to stop there—I've got two minutes left—and give everyone the impression that our current Premier got us where we are today. Let's not forget that the PCs had done their fair share of work to get to this point. It is the PC Party of Ontario that is the party with a history of privatization. We go back to 1999 and talk about the 407. We go back to 2003 and talk about the PCs' attempt to privatize Hydro One—stopped by the

courts. But in the past, the newest member of the PC caucus hadn't even started school when the PCs under Harris—and his education cuts.

Let's talk about something a little more recent. Let's talk about the last leader of the PC Party, the leader that most people sitting here supported in the last election—getting rid of 100,000 workers. In 2012, the leader of the Ontario PC Party released a series of white papers—this is important—that laid out the PC Party vision for how to improve Ontario. It was very clear—and it was laid out very clearly by the member from Windsor West. In one of those white papers, Affordable Energy, he set out a proposition for what should be done with Hydro One, and I want to read it today. The paper says, “Monetize Ontario Power Generation and Hydro One—the publicly owned power generation, transmission and distribution companies—first through a pension-led equity stake, followed later by an initial public offering of shares that will open them to other future investors.”

Do you know what they're saying in that line? “We want to privatize hydro.” Not 60% like you guys did; not 49%. That paper is clear: They wanted to sell 100%. Make no mistake about it—100%. That was just four years ago.

I've got 15 seconds left. The one thing about Mr. Hudak is that I didn't agree with what he said—I was offside from him, but I'm going to tell you what: At least what he said, he stayed by; he didn't flip-flop like the current leader of the PC Party does today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to jump into this debate today brought forward by our leader, Patrick Brown, of the PC caucus, which is about hydro rates in Ontario, the highest of any province in Canada.

The Liberals wasted \$300 million on energy scandals, including \$12 million for consultants instead of hydro relief for low-income families, losing a \$28-million lawsuit to Windstream, an \$81-million accounting error, and losing \$175 million in a court case with energy producers. We're asking the Liberal government to issue a formal apology to the people of Ontario for their scandals, waste, mismanagement and general disregard for the people of the province of Ontario.

It actually saddens me that we have to continue to get up in this Legislature to tell the government how badly they've bungled the electricity file. Unfortunately, the Premier and her government have chosen to ignore our persistent calls for action to address the growing crisis of energy poverty in our province. When I was first elected, there wasn't even the term “energy poverty,” and I haven't been here as long as the member from St. Catharines.

But the Premier's admission made at this past weekend's Liberal Party conference is kind of laughable. Of course it's her fault. Not only is that apology too late, it's a little too late to take responsibility for the energy cost crisis. It's been obvious for years to all Ontarians that the high cost of energy was caused by the Premier's mis-

management. That's why her polling numbers are so low. The rest of the people of Ontario get it. Regardless of what she said, we simply can't trust what she or this government says.

So if the Premier and her government don't want to listen to the opposition, maybe they should listen to some real Ontarians. I'll give you a lot of examples from my riding. They struggle every day with the consequences of this Liberal government's bad policy decisions. They email me and say:

“I am sure you have enough negative feedback on hydro cost to last a lifetime, just wanted to add one more.

“We are on a smart reader with time-of-day usage....

“We have no air conditioning, hot tub or pool. We do have a new gas furnace, use a gas cooktop, have replaced all appliances, we can't do much more.

“We feel after working with the time-of-day usage and often not being able to dry clothes or do other activities at our convenience we are being penalized.

“I phoned a hydro rep and asked why I was paying more than the ‘flat’ rate offered others who did not have to adjust time of usage. Her answer was that some of us lose and some of us win and that if we were a large family and used more power we would ‘win.’ For me this is a no ‘Winn’ situation.”

That's from Omemee.

We have people in Bobcaygeon:

“We live in a ... small home.... Our hydro and water rates are so high here and the only thing we can do is cut back on groceries and any extra pleasures we may enjoy. It's just getting so depressing and frightening for those receiving only gov pensions. Please try to represent us in not having more taxes placed on us with the newest addition of gas taxes. Where will it come from? Perhaps seniors with low income could be excused somehow.”

How about retired seniors living on fixed incomes in the village of Haliburton: “They have informed us that our hydro costs will increase by changing our meters to what are supposed to be smart meters. The only thing ... that these meters have ever done ... is to raise the cost of electricity used or awaiting use.

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“We, as a group of seniors, live in a condominium on fixed incomes with no means of controlling what we're charged for electricity.

“Please help us by trying to control Ms. Wynne's spending.”

“My daughter... Her hydro bills are so high she has had to go to a food bank to feed her family because of her huge” hydro bills. “Carrying” costs “are almost \$150 a month. Her monthly bill is almost \$300. Her husband is on sick leave and she is on maternity leave, so she paid what she could to keep the hydro on. At one point her bill ballooned to over \$700. This is ridiculous. I live in Courtice....” We're “only 40 minutes away. Carrying charges should not be this high.”

Something has to be done to solve this problem. How about all those petitions that keep coming in with the notes?

From Kirkfield: "As seniors we cannot take all these increases. We are at the point that we may have to sell our retirement home thanks to these outrageous increases."

How about from Little Britain: "Last year, this pitiful government received \$29 million for exporting electricity to the US but it cost us taxpayers \$250 million in production costs. How do these guys (Energy Ministers Thibeault and Chiarelli) sleep at night?"

The last one I'm going to add comment to is this: "Being retired, my wife and I are on set incomes." They live in Fenelon Falls. "Hydro and taxes are the biggest strains on" all of us. "We've changed to high-efficiency light bulbs. We do our activities like laundry and the dishwasher after 7 p.m. at night.... We do our part. What about the city people that really do not care! We are not getting treated fairly."

That's just some of the 567,000 families in Ontario that can't pay their hydro bills. The present government should be embarrassed and apologize for putting these people into energy poverty.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Walker: The Premier has admitted to making a mistake with hydro rates. She said, in her words, that mistakes were made. I believe she was referring to her mistake of allowing exorbitant energy costs to push Ontarians into poverty. The hardest hit are our seniors, vulnerable Ontarians and those on social assistance, who continue to be forced to choose between heating and eating.

The average hydro bill has gone up by \$1,000. There have also been businesses of all sizes, some of which have been forced to shut their doors because of out-of-control energy bills, and many more in my riding and across this province telling us and my colleagues that they don't know how long they can hold on, mostly due to skyrocketing energy costs. Regrettably, Mr. Speaker, as has been discussed in the House, our public institutions—our schools, our hospitals, our long-term-care homes—are suffering because of these rising energy costs.

So when the Premier admits to having pushed Ontarians into poverty, I wonder if she is prepared to also apologize for the reckless cuts her energy policies have caused; from the rationing of health care and cancelled surgeries; to the people who are missing out on operations and who are on waiting lists; to the nurses who are losing jobs; to the lack of investment in long-term-care beds; to seniors languishing on wait-lists? Some 26,000 people are currently on a wait-list, and that's expected to double in six years. Is she apologizing for those issues?

Some 600 schools are on the chopping block as we speak as a result of this government and this Premier. Is she apologizing for that, Mr. Speaker? I don't think so. Children are losing schools in their communities; teachers are losing jobs; and communities are being decimated. Is she going to apologize for that, Mr. Speaker?

Family farms and small-town grocers are closing their doors—a negative economic spinoff in rural communities. Businesses are moving or closing, resulting in many people losing their jobs. The reality is that this Liberal government has made partisan political decisions that have had significant negative consequences on Ontarians. Is the Premier going to go apologize for all these mistakes? My constituents want to know because, frankly, nowhere has this Liberal majority been more impractical or useless than to rural and northern Ontario, whose communities have been hardest hit.

Is the Premier apologizing for all of these policies? Because if she isn't, then she is not exactly apologizing. They're hollow words, Mr. Speaker. She has said, "I've made mistakes," but there was no clarity in what she was really referring to. There was nothing to say, "What I'm going to do to actually reverse those mistakes"—or to make amends to the people who she has negatively impacted.

Again, rural Ontario wants to know: What does she regret? Is it the surgeries her government cancelled, the schools her government closed? I don't know. Can the members across the floor clarify how far the apology extends? Do they even know?

The Premier has been evasive and vague, never saying what concrete actions her Liberal government is going to take today to reverse the damage it has created on a multitude of issues. Saying, "I made a mistake"—okay, thanks; I'm glad you at least acknowledged it, but what are you really remorseful for? What are you going to do to correct those actions, to undo the misdeeds that you've done? People across our province are suffering, and I haven't heard a single thing yet where she said, "I made a mistake, and here's what I'm going to do tomorrow to start to address it."

Is she going to cancel any further sales of Hydro One shares, an asset owned by the people of Ontario—and/or will she put a moratorium on any more green energy projects that require subsidies? Mr. Speaker, it's going to cost \$133 billion over the next 20 years because of that decision.

Has she stepped up and said, "I made a mistake and I'll stop it in its tracks"? No, she hasn't, Mr. Speaker. Is she going to ask the Liberal Party, her cronies in Ontario, to repay the \$300 million it wasted on energy scandals, millions paid by the hard-working taxpayers of Ontario?

Will she repay to the taxpayers the \$12 million she wasted for consultants and then put every penny of it towards hydro relief for low-income families? If you recall, Mr. Speaker, I believe about \$9.2 million went to consultants and about another \$2.7 million to actually advertise and market the program. How much money actually got to the front line, to the people who need those relief efforts? Is she going to apologize to them? I'm not certain.

What about the \$28 million she lost in a lawsuit to Windstream, and the other \$179 million she lost in a court case with energy producers? This is all money that could be going to the front line, to the people less fortunate, to the people who need community and social

services, to our seniors, to our long-term-care facilities where people are on waiting lists.

Again, Mr. Speaker, she admitted that mistakes were made, but it remains unclear what exact mistakes and what she is going to do, what she is going to commit to, so that we can truly believe—this is about trust. Saying that you made a mistake means nothing. It's hollow unless you're actually going to step up and say, "This is what I will do tomorrow to start to address that and to make amends for those poor decisions."

As the saying goes, whatever could not be said clearly was probably not thought clearly through either. For this reason, I support the call for a formal apology to the people of Ontario for the Liberal scandals, waste and mismanagement by the Premier and all of the people on that side of the House who stand behind her. She has made mistakes, but we want to know exactly what mistakes she admits to making, and what she's going to do to reverse the misdeeds and the pain and the suffering of the people who truly have been impacted by these poor decisions, by these mistakes that she has admitted to making.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Mr. Brown has moved opposition motion number 4. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1748 to 1758.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): All members, please take your seats.

Mr. Brown has moved opposition day motion number 4. All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted
Barrett, Toby
Brown, Patrick
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon
Clark, Steve
Fedeli, Victor
French, Jennifer K.
Gretzky, Lisa
Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Michael

Hillier, Randy
Jones, Sylvia
Martow, Gila
McDonell, Jim
Miller, Norm
Miller, Paul
Munro, Julia
Natyshak, Taras
Pettapiece, Randy
Scott, Laurie

Singh, Jagmeet
Taylor, Monique
Thompson, Lisa M.
Vanthof, John
Walker, Bill
Wilson, Jim
Yakabuski, John
Yurek, Jeff

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): All those opposed to the motion will please rise and be recognized.

Nays

Albanese, Laura
Baker, Yvan
Ballard, Chris
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Bradley, James J.
Chan, Michael
Chiarelli, Bob
Colle, Mike
Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant
Damerla, Dipika
Del Duca, Steven
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
Dong, Han

Duguid, Brad
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Fraser, John
Hoggarth, Ann
Hoskins, Eric
Hunter, Mitzie
Kiwala, Sophie
Lalonde, Marie-France
Leal, Jeff
MacCharles, Tracy
Malhi, Harinder
Mangat, Amrit
Martins, Cristina
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McGarry, Kathryn

Milczyn, Peter Z.
Mori, Reza
Murray, Glen R.
Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Naqvi, Yasir
Orazi, David
Potts, Arthur
Qadri, Shafiq
Rinaldi, Lou
Sandals, Liz
Sousa, Charles
Thibeault, Glenn
Vernile, Daiene
Wong, Soo
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Mr. Todd Decker): The ayes are 28; the nays are 47.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negatived.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Since it is now 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1802.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenante-gouverneure: Hon. / L'hon. Elizabeth Dowdeswell, OC, OOnt.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffier: Todd Decker

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, William Short

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Hon. / L'hon. Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Anderson, Granville (LIB)	Durham	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Baker, Yvan (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Ballard, Hon. / L'hon. Chris (LIB)	Newmarket–Aurora	Minister of Housing / Ministre du Logement Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Brown, Patrick (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of International Trade / Ministre du Commerce International
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure
Cho, Raymond Sung Joon (PC)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Coe, Lorne (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Anti-Racism / Ministre délégué à l'Action contre le racisme
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Hon. / L'hon. Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister Responsible for Seniors Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Del Duca, Hon. / L'hon. Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development and Growth / Ministre du Développement économique et de la Croissance
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Jacek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Kiwala, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Hon. / L'hon. Marie-France (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister Responsible for Accessibility / Ministre responsable de l'Accessibilité Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Chair of Cabinet / Présidente du Conseil des ministres Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Advanced Education and Skills Development / Ministre de l'Enseignement supérieur et de la Formation professionnelle Minister Responsible for Digital Government / Ministre responsable de l'Action pour un gouvernement numérique Minister of Municipal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires municipales
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGarry, Hon. / L'hon. Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
McMahon, Hon. / L'hon. Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
McMeekin, Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Milczyn, Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research, Innovation and Science / Ministre de la Recherche, de l'Innovation et des Sciences
Munro, Julia (PC)	York-Simcoe	
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Naidoo-Harris, Hon. / L'hon. Indira (LIB)	Halton	Associate Minister of Education (Early Years and Child Care) / Ministre associée de l'Éducation (Petite enfance et Garde d'enfants)
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Attorney General / Procureur général Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent-Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Oraziotti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth-Wellington	
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches-East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland-Quinte West	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea-Gore-Malton	Deputy Leader, Recognized Party / Chef adjoint de parti reconnu
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward-Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto-Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga-Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thibeault, Hon. / L'hon. Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron-Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Deputy Speaker / Vice-présidente
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin-Middlesex-London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation / Ministre des Relations avec les Autochtones et de la Réconciliation
Vacant	Niagara West-Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest-Glanbrook	
Vacant	Ottawa-Vanier	

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Monique Taylor
Bob Delaney, Cheri DiNovo
Joe Dickson, Han Dong
Michael Harris, Sophie Kiwala
Arthur Potts, Todd Smith
Monique Taylor
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Peter Z. Milczyn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Ann Hoggarth
Yvan Baker, Toby Barrett
Han Dong, Victor Fedeli
Catherine Fife, Ann Hoggarth
Cristina Martins, Peter Z. Milczyn
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Eric Rennie

Standing Committee on General Government / Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Président: Grant Crack
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lou Rinaldi
Yvan Baker, Mike Colle
Grant Crack, Lisa Gretzky
Ann Hoggarth, Harinder Malhi
Jim McDonell, Lou Rinaldi
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Daiene Vernile
James J. Bradley, Raymond Sung Joon Cho
Wayne Gates, Monte Kwinter
Amrit Mangat, Cristina Martins
Randy Pettapiece, Shafiq Qaadri
Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Mike Colle
Bob Delaney, Randy Hillier
Michael Mantha, Arthur Potts
Shafiq Qaadri, Laurie Scott
Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative

Chair / Président: Monte McNaughton
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Steve Clark
Granville Anderson, Robert Bailey
James J. Bradley, Steve Clark
Vic Dhillon, Sophie Kiwala
Michael Mantha, Monte McNaughton
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
John Fraser, Ernie Hardeman
Percy Hatfield, Monte Kwinter
Lisa MacLeod, Harinder Malhi
Peter Z. Milczyn, Julia Munro
Arthur Potts
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

Chair / Président: Ted McMeekin
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Joe Dickson
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Grant Crack
Joe Dickson, Jennifer K. French
Ted McMeekin, Mario Sergio
Bill Walker, Soo Wong
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Christopher Tyrell

Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jagmeet Singh
Granville Anderson, Lorne Coe
Vic Dhillon, John Fraser
Amrit Mangat, Gila Martow
Ted McMeekin, Jagmeet Singh
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch